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CEDAR MIDDLE SCHOOL'S RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION JOURNEY: A  
SYSTEMATIC, MULTI-TIER, PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH  
TO PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

by

Shannon Kay Dulaney

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

Education  
(Curriculum and Instruction)

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Logan, Utah

2010

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## ABSTRACT

Cedar Middle School's Response to Intervention Journey: A Systematic,  
Multi-Tier, Problem-Solving Approach to Program Implementation

by

Shannon Kay Dulaney, Doctor of Education

Utah State University, 2010

Major Professor: Dr. Barry Franklin

Department: Emma Eccles Jones School of Teacher Education and Leadership

The purpose of the present study was to record Cedar Middle School's (CMS) response to intervention implementation journey. It is a qualitative case study that examines one school's efforts to bring school improvements under the response to inventory (RtI) umbrella in order to achieve a more systematic approach to providing high-quality educational services to every student enrolled at CMS. Participants included the 10 members of the school's Student Success Team along with the principal and assistant principal. The recorded journey included: (a) a description of the RtI consensus and infrastructure-building processes, (b) an exploration of the SST perceptions of school-wide intervention efforts both past and present, (c) a review of the school's accomplishments and the barriers to implementation encountered, and (d) the implications for further school improvement efforts and research. Participants submitted to interviews, observations, and focus group meetings. Although the purpose of the study

was not to measure program effectiveness, preliminary data are included that report the school's efforts toward systems change was helpful for students and is having a positive effect on student performance in reading comprehension. Participants were also able to share anecdotal evidence of increased student motivation and other behavioral changes that were natural consequences of their efforts. This evidence is reported in the narrative found in Chapters IV and V. Conclusions were based on participant input, recorded measures, and analyses conducted as part of the present study. Cautions were also discussed, including the limitations and delimitations of the present study. Finally, implications of the present study were provided for RtI and the field of schoolwide systematic interventions and support.

(254 pages)

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I would like to thank the staff of CMS, their administrators, and the Student Success Team for letting me observe and reflect on their school-improvement efforts. Most especially, I would like to thank Mrs. Jane Twitchell for the artful instructional leadership she provided to this staff as they traveled the RtI journey. Her input and insight have proven key to this qualitative study and, more importantly, the school improvement efforts of CMS.

Finally, I would like to thank the Iron County School District office staff, coordinators, and administrators for their encouragement and support. Their efforts to provide a means for research application have lent credibility and validity to the study.

This work is dedicated to my husband, Tim, and our children and grandchildren. Their love, support, and cheerleading have been priceless. Tim, I am especially grateful for your good nature and sense of humor that always helps to keep me grounded.

Shannon K. Dulaney

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

With the reauthorization of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004), and the passing of NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001), educators have been encouraged to initiate and infuse a response to intervention (RtI) process systematically in public schools to help struggling students make substantial progress toward meeting grade level standards. RtI is defined as:

The practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions. (National Association of State Directors of Special Education [NASDSE], 2005, p. 16)

Thus far, many educators have seen this as a special education issue because of the context in which its ideas were proffered. Current research has found that "...state and local education agencies are being guided to foster effective leadership in RtI design and implement its precepts across general, remedial and special education programs" (NASDSE, 2005, p. 3). This design can be found readily in many elementary school settings across the nation. They have adopted the three tier literacy model advocated by professionals and researchers in the field of literacy education and are experiencing some success, especially as it pertains to referring students for special education testing and services. Students, who prior to this initiative would have been referred for testing, are now receiving degrees of intervention that allow them to "catch up" to their peers or show significant progress, indicating that instead of a disability, they quite possibly have not had consistency of effective instruction; developmental delays may be involved, or

any number of variables other than a disability have affected their progress in school.

Secondary schools in the state of Utah have not been a part of this movement at any significant level thus far, and each district and individual school has been left to their own means to figure out how the RtI model can best be implemented. Discussions of RtI were just beginning to occur when I became the Special Education Director for the Iron County School District. New to special education, in general, and having taught in the secondary setting and general education classroom, but with at-risk populations for eight years, I was intrigued by the concept of intervening early to help all students. Many of the young men who I had been teaching had, for varied reasons, fallen through the proverbial “cracks.” There was no significant data, in most cases, reporting how teachers and administrators had intervened. I was always hopeful that alternative strategies had been tried, but it would have been helpful to have access to recorded data describing what had been done and any progress that was made. RtI puts a system in place to assess, monitor progress and then make adjustments to curriculum and instruction based on the recorded data. It made sense to me that schools would benefit from exploring and implementing such a model systematically in an effort to help all students. This curiosity, coupled with the increasing pressures of meeting the mandates of NCLB and adequate yearly progress (AYP) at the district and school level, was enough to strengthen my resolve that systematic RtI implementation would be a worthwhile focus for a qualitative case study.

The purpose of this introduction is to provide an overview of the background and nature of the Cedar Middle School (CMS) RtI process. In a sense, the administration, staff and students have become pioneers in the systematic implementation of RtI at the

secondary level in Utah. They have chosen RtI as a method of reform in an effort to help all students within their sphere of influence experience a measure of success that may have previously eluded them. It is this recorded effort that provided the structure for this qualitative case study.

Much of what Brown and Moffett (1999) wrote in their book, *The Hero's Journey*, applied to CMS's movement toward the systematic implementation of RtI. "The hero's journey is present in all educational settings when the power of shared inquiry and commitment overcomes despair and leads to possibility and hopefulness" (p. 13). Collectively, the CMS staff knew they had students who struggled in their classrooms every year. Individual efforts to intervene were taking place, but significant and sustainable progress eluded many of these students. Based on grades, attendance reports and recidivism in the behavior skills program, the CMS staff knew these students continued to struggle despite these efforts. Collaboration between teachers to determine student strengths and areas of concern was happening sporadically. Many times, teachers were operating in isolation to combat a collective problem. School staff and administrators "felt" like their efforts were, at times, successful and beneficial, but there was no data or proof to back up those feelings. There was significant concern expressed by teachers, as students did not do as well as was expected once interventions were in place. This unexpected outcome was all at once discouraging and motivating for the CMS staff. They began to collectively speak the language of RtI. A process for immediate and systematic response began to take shape in an effort to identify struggling students, put interventions in place and then monitor their progress. As they collected the data

provided by this process, the administration and staff could see real evidence that what they were doing was increasing student motivation and academic achievement.

To put into place a process that is relatively new and untried, you need some idea of the “...terrain that lies between you and your destination and a plan for crossing it. Like any traveler, you will want an accurate map, the best information you can get from those who have made the trip before you, and a reliable guidebook if one is to be had” (Brown & Moffett, 1999, p. 38). State agencies have worked to share the theories behind RtI, but as far as giving specific instructions or a course to follow, the ideas have been slow in coming. Without specific direction, the CMS staff needed to research the concepts behind RtI, visit with those in the district and state who had implemented its precepts in various settings, and then develop a process that would work for them and their students. There have been unforeseen obstacles to face, which have appeared in the form of challenges unique to the secondary school setting and a population of students who require different interventions based on their school and life experiences. This is what has made movement toward change a more arduous and slow process.

Some of the challenges that CMS experienced during RtI implementation were as follows.

1. Class scheduling issues—when will students be taken out of class for tier three instruction, and which classes can they miss with the least amount of disruption academically?

2. Multiple teachers—collaboration and communication to decide on essential components of RtI infrastructure building and implementation. With varying schedules

when would the student success team (SST) and grade level teams meet?

3. Multiple subjects—Would the core principles of RtI transfer to other subjects besides literacy? Can teachers come to a consensus as to when tier three students could meet, and the amount of time needed to be out of regularly scheduled classes?

4. Consensus building among a more diverse staff—There would be a need to address issues of territorialism and feelings of subject importance within the scheme of RtI. In addition, the CMS staff will need to give time for assessment that normally would have been spent in teaching. They will need to find a balance between teaching and assessing.

5. Integration of consistent positive behavior supports school-wide so that program integrity can be achieved and it can be integrated into the new systematic RtI process; and

6. Full integration of a study skills program to fit the needs of struggling students—The staff will need to develop a consistent referral form and process for this existing program that would allow it to also integrate seamlessly into the new system of services.

Keeping these challenges in mind, and finding a way to meet them systematically has been at the center of the school's efforts toward change and the implementation of RtI. What has become clear to the CMS administrators and SST is that their efforts should not only be toward academic improvement for all students, but they should include supports for behavioral improvement as well.

In RtI, the continuum of services includes universal interventions at Tier I, sometimes referred to as “primary prevention,” which are in place for students to



support positive academic and behavioral, and mental health outcomes. Work in the positive behavior support field emphasizes strategies such as teaching all students school wide rules and expectations, and implementing procedures and disciplinary policies that create a positive, respectful school environment. (Martinez, Nellis, & Prendergast, 2006, p. 3)

It is this premise that served as the initial focus for this study, during the recorded journey. How would the process of RtI, which has predominantly been used at the elementary school level, translate to the secondary school setting for implementation of academic and behavioral interventions? This is the central question of this qualitative case study. The following are subquestions that logically took shape as the study progressed:

1. Why did CMS choose to employ the RtI model?
2. What were the existing perceptions of RtI amongst the study's stakeholders?
3. What practices and strategies did they implement on a school-wide basis to help students succeed academically and behaviorally?
4. What were the obstacles to implementation?
5. What are the implications for implementation?

As stated previously, responding with interventions in a systemic fashion is a fairly new and unexplored field at the secondary level. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study has been to look at the journey toward implementation that CMS chose to take, match their efforts to the current research, and then provide some insight as to the implications for change not only for this school, but also for any who choose this same path.

This qualitative study has been conducted using the varying perspectives of each participant involved. Every effort has been made to examine and record CMS's

intervention practices before RtI, and then identify what program and process changes took place. From this information, resulting challenges and successes were identified. Consideration was given to collected and recorded data in regards to the tiered interventions identified by grade level teams and monitored and evaluated by the school's SST. In addition, the staff looked at their current study and behavior skills programs to evaluate their viability within the new RtI structure. They wanted to discover, in part, whether each has a direct effect on the other as it pertains to student success. Before the study, significant and valuable insight into this phenomenon had been gained from the actual participants. The evaluation of this insight was important for the study, but even more important for the CMS community. It gave credence to their work and provided motivation to keep moving forward with their systematic response to intervention efforts.

Progress monitoring results from the intermittent literacy testing completed on every student in the school have been considered. This data allowed the CMS staff to take a collective look back at previous practice and what led them to begin the RtI journey. It also served as the catalyst for program change and provided direction for the future. It was this need and desire for direction and a plan for where they wanted to take their staff and students in this effort of school improvement that motivated CMS's administration and leadership teams to consider RtI as the vehicle they would use for the journey.

In order to record this process as accurately and comprehensively as possible, participant interviews and meeting and process observations were completed. In addition, essential documents were analyzed for content and purpose within the study. Of these three methods, the participant interviews and process observations proved to be the most

valuable and were the basis for most of the time spent in data collection. It was during the meeting and process observations that the study began to take shape and the premise for it was solidified. “Observation is a research tool when it “(1) serves a formulated research purpose, (2) is planned deliberately, (3) is recorded systematically, and (4) is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability” (Merriam, 1998, pp. 94-95). As administrators, teachers and staff met to determine the direction for RtI implementation, it became evident that the lessons learned and the ideas shared would serve as the foundation for the process. This is where consensus was established and possible obstacles and end results were identified.

Before any school improvement effort is undertaken, a school must decide what it stands for and what it hopes to achieve... this theory of purpose becomes the yardstick by which schools measure how well the policies they adopt contribute to and support their most important goals. Schools can then design appropriate courses of action that work toward supporting their goals. (Mellard & Johnson, 2008, p. 13)

Consensus for RtI was established during the summer of 2007 when the school’s SST and the assistant principal, attended an RtI workshop held in Park City. In the fall of 2007, the RtI vision was taken to the collective CMS staff. Carefully and artfully, the seeds of consensus were planted. Helpful to this process, was that a culture of shared inquiry had been established when this school was first organized in 2005. Even before the administration and staff knew about RtI. Consensus building had become a part of this school’s philosophy.

From this shared vision, CMS administrators and their SST developed an action plan to establish an order for RtI implementation, and consensus was the first critical step in articulating a process for change. Once this vision was established, timelines were

developed for associated activities to achieve results. This made the observation process orderly and systematic. Recording what was said, discussed and observed at each meeting where key discussions about vision, process and data took place, proved invaluable.

Not only was this effort key to understanding the CMS journey, it also proved to be the most difficult. Critics of this data-gathering technique are quick to note how subjective and, at times, unreliable the nature of human perception can be. It was important to remember that researcher bias would need to be kept in check during every observation. Having a specific purpose during each session and correlating that purpose to what was said and done during meetings and discussions helped to accomplish this.

Second only to the observations in difficulty with data collection in this study were the participant interviews. In order to, again, keep personal biases under control, it was important to follow an outline and keep the process formal. Whereas the observations were done on CMS staff terms, it was essential for the interviews to take place in a specific place and follow a specific, researcher-developed format.

Depending on the job description and participant tasks relative to the CMS RtI process, it was necessary to tailor some of the questions for each participant and group. Having an outline of questions prepared beforehand was critical. In addition, a concerted effort was made to not allow interviews to evolve into a conversation or “give and take,” related to the participant’s perception or views and researcher responses. At times, this became critical and a little uncomfortable, as a few of the interviewees wanted to ask questions during the process.

Finally, once the observations were completed, the interviews conducted and the

field notes, journal entries and archival evidence gathered, it was time to code the information. From this coding process, reoccurring themes surfaced. These will be identified in Chapter III and discussed more specifically in Chapters IV and V. The discovery of these themes gave structure and form to the study and these chapters. Considering the chronology of events that took place, it was critical to "...analyze the multiple sources of data to determine evidence for each step or phase in the evolution of the case" (Cresswell, 1998, p. 13). From the initial exposure to RtI and the philosophy and premises behind the process, to building a preliminary plan and consensus that ultimately led to RtI implementation, this was a well-orchestrated journey.

Moving to a discussion of researcher assumptions, limitations and delimitations, it becomes clear that a correct or realistic view of this phenomenon is essential to the credibility of the study. The underlying assumption in this process was that CMS was ready to begin implementing response to intervention using a systematic, multi-tier, problem-solving approach; that they had a clear vision for what needed to be done and would be able to develop a plan that was palpable, doable and effective. In watching this process play out and recording the journey, it became evident that this team knew what they were doing, and they were confident in this knowledge. The administrators and SST had done their homework. They were prepared. There were moments of questioning and frustration that ultimately strengthened their resolve in moving forward. The CMS staff were implementing a process and collecting data along the way that could be used and have far reaching effects on all secondary programs and school improvement efforts in the district.

With this realization, it is important to also note that this study does have its limitations and delimitations. When one thinks about the far-reaching effects of the processes and data presented to others who may be interested in the RtI process, it is daunting to know that, depending on the comprehensive nature and the details of the study, others may or may not be able to replicate it in their particular settings. Like CMS, those who consider the systematic implementation of interventions that the RtI model outlines, will need to consider the research, develop a plan for improvement, and then work with their staff to create a system that will foster a climate of support to help all students.

Demographically, the CMS staff and students will be different, to varying degrees, than those in other communities. This is a presentation of a recorded journey, and journeys are traveled successfully based on the combined efforts of their participants. A map that charts the path and direction is helpful, and a vision for what needs to be achieved is critical, but the “how” part of the process must be personal and dynamic. It is unlikely that the results will be the same as what has been recorded in another place and time and with another group of people. Those who wish to apply RtI in their own settings will need to follow the essential elements of consensus building, systematic school wide assessment, progress monitoring etc. The nuances of RtI will need to be molded to fit their particular settings.

Today’s economic climate has also made certain aspects of RtI challenging and proved to be a delimitation of this study. This challenge will present itself differently depending, again, on the time and place of implementation. With the reauthorization of

IDEA and the upcoming reauthorization of NCLB, districts are, and will be encouraged to use up to 15% of their federal special education funding for RtI implementation. Title I funding for the economically disadvantaged and Title III funding for the English Language Learner population can also be figured into the funding formula. Each state and district will need to determine how this can happen by blurring the lines that currently exist in funding practices, program planning and service delivery.

Conversely, the methods of this qualitative case study will remain a constant as others seek to use the recorded journey as a starting place for implementation or further study. The most glaring limitation to this study is the opportunity for researcher bias and subjectivity of the researcher and participants to be scrutinized as the findings are presented. As noted previously, there was an awareness of this limitation, even before the study parameters were identified. Knowing that these were considered throughout the development and realization of the project has helped to keep the study depiction and data presented as accurate an accounting as possible.

Arguably, the most important part of this initial chapter is an explanation of the significance of CMS's RtI journey. As mentioned in the opening paragraph, to this point, there has not been a substantial amount of instruction on how to implement response to intervention at the secondary level. Although elementary schools have been using its precepts as a part of the three-tier literacy model, the secondary school structure is different. Scheduling, class size, multiple teachers, multiple subjects and a more diverse staff, to name a few, complicate the process. This school's efforts and the results of their labors will prove both enlightening and instructional to others who choose to follow the

model. The RtI framework, and specifically its systematic approach to monitoring the progress of all students, provides a comprehensive approach to helping every student: not just those that struggle, but also those who may need enrichment and anything in between.

[The] intended goal of NCLB is to ensure high achievement for all students and to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment through its emphasis on scientifically based research and accountability. RtI has clear parallels to these goals with its own goals for high student achievement and the alignment of instruction, interventions, and assessment to promote student learning. (Mellard & Johnson, 2008, p. 17)

This study provides a practical look at how one school is making this ideal a reality. If the goal or vision for today's schools is to improve student performance in order to first, make a difference in a student's educational experience and then, as a natural outcome of this effort, help schools meet the requirements of NCLB and the IDEA, then CMS's efforts and this recorded journey can serve as a model to follow.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Most of the literature written on RtI, thus far, has revolved around the premise that its model and approaches can be valuable tools in determining whether or not a student has a specific learning disability. With the reauthorization of IDEA (2004), this notion has been promoted and, in some cases, its precepts have replaced the IQ discrepancy model in identifying disabilities. This replacement practice is more the exception, and most state and local education agencies are using a combination of the old and new. Utah is one such state. It is the notion of RtI as a process for transforming how we educate students—all students, that served as the central idea for this study of CMS's RtI journey and their systematic school-wide approach to implement RtI in the secondary school setting by embedding positive behavior supports in a multi-tier model.

The concept of responding to the individual needs of students by intervening in a timely manner has been around since the 1970s, but doing so systematically has only recently come to the forefront in the education community with the passing of the NCLB Act (2002). State and local education agencies are now encouraged to take a look at current systems of monitoring student progress through assessment and then adjusting student services to meet individual needs. If these agencies are not able to show sufficient progress, then sanctions are placed upon them until changes can be shown. Nationwide, elementary schools have used the three-tier literacy model as a basis for systematically intervening and are experiencing significant success. As noted in Chapter I, secondary schools have not been a part of these changes in student support services and therefore

the research is thin at this level. This lack of example and supportive research has led to “...widespread confusion as to what RtI is and whether schools should be required to use it” (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007, p. 14). Questions range from how do we use it to those that are concerned with the far-reaching effects and ramifications for state and local education agencies. One such concern is that of determining whether or not it is a feasible process for older students and all subjects, and what are the implications for learning disabilities, special education, and general education at this level.

By nature, students are different and their needs vary according to circumstance. The same can be said of school systems and school sites. Perhaps this is why no definitive procedures for program development and implementation have been published at this point, or may ever come about. Each school will need to find its own way and discover what will work best for its own set of circumstances including, and possibly most importantly, the nature of the students they serve. The need for examples of successful secondary RtI models is substantial. Specifically, the middle school level “...represents a crucial point in a student’s academic career, laying the foundation for successful completion of high school” (Johnson & Smith, 2008, p. 46). These students are required to deal with a more rigorous curriculum that is no longer focused on acquiring basic skills. Students at the middle-school level are reading to learn instead of learning to read. If they have not gained this crucial skill, among others, by the time they reach the middle school level, they will struggle to achieve at a pace necessary to be successful as they continue on to high school. The research suggests that the RtI model, if implemented systematically and with integrity, can help students meet these more

rigorous educational demands.

Even though the process is not specifically defined, certain precepts, goals and research-based standards have been extended for consideration. Most of these have been concerned, again, with the early grades and early intervention. It is this researcher's hope that this study can be translated to the secondary level, and that a synthesis of concepts and then application to the secondary setting will help CMS on their RtI journey. It is this early research, along with the recent publications that explore the broad possibilities for implementation that will be discussed in this review. These publications provided a concrete base for observation and the development of the case study protocol used with CMS.

Those who have spent time researching RtI since the late 1980s suggested, "...it is more about evolution than it is about revolution" (Tilly, 2006, p. 1). It is more of a process than a program or model. If those who seek to implement RtI can remember this, educators will not see it as a fad that will run its course and be outdated once the next "new thing" comes along. Tilly was careful to recognize that, simply put, the following were three general components to RtI, and they were all educationally sound ideas that have been time-tested and proven.

1. It is a logical structure for allocating precious instructional resources efficiently and targeting them specifically to student needs—all student needs.
2. It is a commitment to use the best findings from our current and emerging knowledge-base (scientific research) as we go about our instruction; and
3. It is a commitment to use a logical, decision-making framework to guide our instruction (data-based decision making or the problem-solving method).  
(Tilly, 2006, p. 1)

Each of these three components is woven into the current research on school

improvement and RtI, and they will be discussed at varying levels of intensity throughout this literature review. The key to this discussion is that these three components, if applied systematically, can bring coherence and cohesiveness to a school's improvement efforts through RtI. They should work in concert with one another, and it is the latter two of these three components, along with a basic discussion of the RtI process, which will comprise the majority of this review.

It must be noted that this presentation of the RtI literature includes both the theoretical concepts behind the model and examples found in the literature that report the practical application and implications for implementation. They are reported together within the research and more effectively discussed in concert.

### Funding Considerations

A brief discussion about funding allocations cannot be eliminated and it certainly can be a sensitive topic among educators. In a survey conducted by Wiener and Soodak (2008), it was found that 183 or 78% of the state and district administrators surveyed, felt that funding was a significant challenge in implementing RtI. Successful implementation is dependent on collaboration and the coordination of services and the funding associated with these services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 granted more flexibility in how special education funds could be used. The NASDSE supported this movement toward the efficient use of funds and suggests that "[These] changes [allow] local education agencies (LEA) to:

1. Use funds to carry out school wide programs as set forth in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (20 U.S.C. 6314);

2. Use funds to support school wide programs that benefit children with disabilities while providing incidental benefits to students without disabilities (20 U.S.C. 1413(a)(4)); and
3. Use 5% of funds to develop and implement a coordinated service system (20 U.S.C. 1413(a)(2)(D)).” (NASDSE, 2005, p. 16)

IDEA takes the 1997 statute a little further and “permits districts to use as much as 15% of their special education monies to fund early intervention activities” (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006b, p. 93).

In the Florida Department of Education Statewide Response to RtI Implementation Plan developed in 2008, the following funding considerations are outlined:

When planning for training and ongoing implementation, districts should anticipate fiscal needs in relation to, but not limited to, the following areas:

- substitutes for staff to participate in training;
- release time for staff for ongoing collaboration, planning, and implementation;
- registration fees for professional development as needed;
- resource needs: review of core curriculum and assessment practices, review of school-wide behavioral practices, interventions, progress monitoring tools, coaching support, etc.;
- annual revision of School Improvement Plans; and
- annual Needs Assessment Process (pp. 13-14).

Further, this document gave districts the “...responsibility and flexibility to align available resources to support the full implementation of their RtI activities” (p. 14).

Tilly (2006) advocated the rethinking of how education agencies, both state and local, view and expend these funding allocations. In the past, districts have used Title I, English Language Learner and Gifted and Talented funds in isolation. “But knowing that a student qualifies for Title I assistance, for example, tells us nothing about a student’s

specific learning needs” (Tilly, p. 4). Most RtI models use a multi-tiered approach that operates to meet the needs of every student, including each of the populations mentioned. Does it not make sense to use funding sources in collaboration to meet the needs of all students? Instead of using funds in a broad sense, would it not be more effective to target specific student needs with specific interventions? As a school that has accepted the challenge to implement RtI systematically, CMS will need to ask the following questions as they evaluate current programs and practices and move toward a more cohesive and collaborative way to help all students achieve:

1. Does it make more sense to use funding sources in collaboration to meet the needs of all students?
2. Instead of using funds in a broad sense, would it be more effective to target specific student needs with specific interventions?

In the Illinois State RtI Plan published on January 1, 2008, it suggested that “districts have the responsibility and flexibility to align available resources to support the full implementation of their RtI plan...and are encouraged to plan for the possible use of the following funding sources to support...implementation” (p. 8):

1. Federal Title I, II, and III funds;
2. Federal IDEA Part B Dollars;
3. General funds; and
4. State Board of Education funding.

In their plan, Illinois recognizes that, in certain situations, NCLB title funds can be used to support district and school RtI efforts. Most often, as in the case of Title II, which

provides professional development supplementary funds to school districts, resources can help to support the professional development component of RtI to train staff in processes such as coaching, that allow teachers to work collaboratively to become more effective teachers. Also, as long as states do not mandate specific interventions and resources, “...districts have the flexibility to choose district-appropriate interventions, resources and materials, and Title I paid staff can assist in working with identified students to provide intervening services; and resources and materials may be shared among programs” (Illinois State Response to Intervention Plan, 2008, p. 9). Title III funds are more restrictive, in that they can only be used to support and supplement services for English language learners (ELL’s) involved in specific interventions.

District general funds are also an appropriate source for RtI program funding. With recent and impending budget cuts based on funding shortfalls in our nation, districts will find it challenging, at best, to find funds for additional services. They are, and will continue to be encouraged to pursue funding for RtI efforts from grant opportunities both at the state and federal levels and also look at current federal, state and local funding sources in a broader sense to serve all students. The state of Illinois’ effort to develop a statewide response to intervention plan is a move in the right direction. This resource helps to articulate a cohesive plan of action to determine funding allocation sources and where they can best be used to improve student achievement. Utah is currently in the process of putting their state RtI plan together and district leaders are being encouraged to do the same. Iron County School District, of which CMS is a part, has a district RtI leadership team in place and has put a district blueprint together to give every school

some direction in developing their school RtI plans and provide ideas for funding and implementation (see Appendix S). The implications of the completed blueprint will be discussed further in Chapter V.

### Effective Instruction

Moving from funding to a discussion of research-based effective instruction and creating coherence through the coordination of instructional efforts is essential. Building consensus among school staff as to whether or not RtI is important, necessary, or fits with current school improvement goals is an essential precursor to developing this coordination.

Involving teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members in skillful ways promotes collective commitment to learning for all students. Launching such a shared vision and visionary journey into school improvement unites us as travelers on the journey toward school improvement that is challenging and deeply satisfying, and which leads to remarkable results for all learners. (Lambert, 2003, p. 45)

The concept of professional learning communities (PLC) that has become widely accepted in the education communities of our nation, by their very nature, can provide structure and valid research for the implementation of RtI practices.

The very essence of a learning community is a focus on and a commitment to the learning of each student.... Members work together to clarify exactly what each student must learn, monitor each student's learning on a timely basis, provide systematic interventions that ensure students receive additional time and support for learning when they struggle, and extend and enrich learning when students have already mastered the intended outcomes. (DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2006, p. 3)

In essence, this description outlines the processes of putting into place a three-tier program for intervention that RtI requires. Once consensus and RtI program



understanding is achieved, schools can begin to use research to drive their decisions about reform and implementation. The current literature (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006a; Johnson, Mellard, Fuchs, & McKnight, 2006), suggested that a successful RtI process included the following critical features:

1. high-quality, scientifically based classroom instruction;
2. school-wide screening of academics and behavior;
3. progress monitoring of student performance;
4. implementation of research-based interventions at all tiers; and
5. fidelity checks on implementation.

Figure 1 depicts the pyramid-style model embraced by the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) that advocates the use of a three-tier model and reflects the findings of this research. It addresses each of these five components within its structure and reflects the need for attention to academics and behavior. A coaching component is placed at the base of the model, suggesting the importance of providing essential staff development and support to ensure a strong foundation for implementation. The three-tier literacy model has been widely used and reported on as one that is essential to a successful RtI school-wide effort and it incorporates each of the aforementioned five components. The roots of this model "...can be found in the field of public health [and] has been integrated into the No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB). In public health and medicine, an example of primary intervention [tier one] is mandatory immunizations for certain diseases" (Chidsey & Steege, 2005, p. 16).

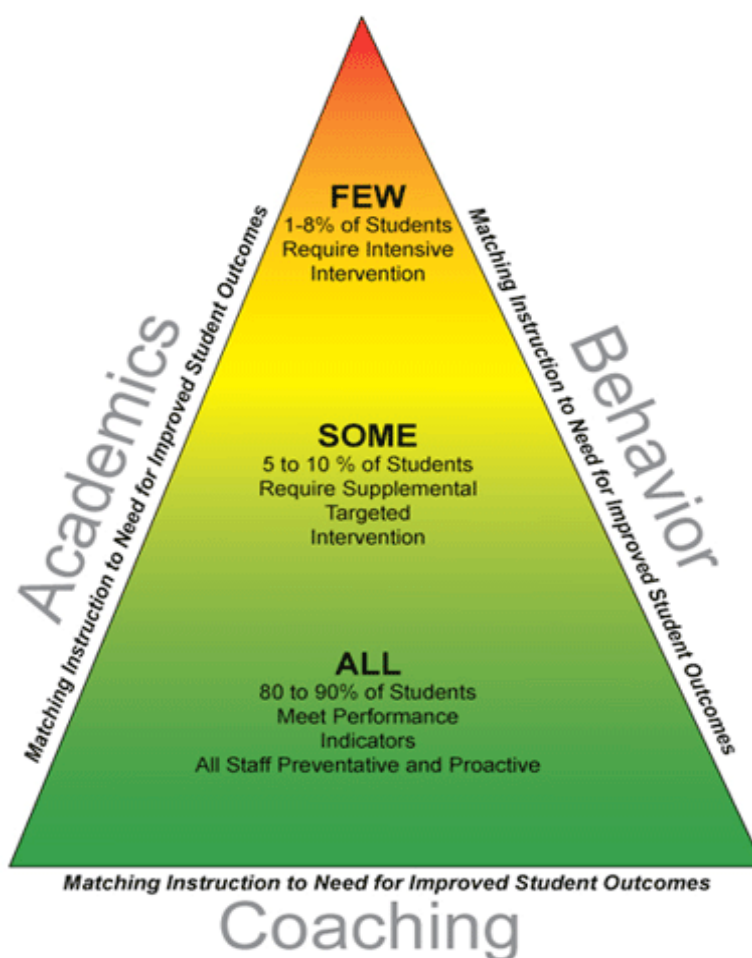


Figure 1. Utah State Office of Education ABC RtI model.

In education, primary interventions or tier one is delivered to every student and “...involves a high-quality school and classroom environment, scientifically sound core curriculum and instruction, and intentional instructional practices” (Martinez et al., 2006, p. 1). Before students are considered to possibly have a learning disability, school staff must look at teacher effectiveness as it relates to instructional methods, practice and delivery. Tier one operates to serve all students with good instruction and gives every student the same opportunities to learn: these opportunities begin in the general education

classroom. “Under tiered models of service delivery, 80% to 85% of the general population should be successful at the first tier of intervention with no need of further intervention if the instruction is effective” (Johnson & Smith, 2008, p. 47).

Educational systems that choose to operate using the tiered RtI model must first evaluate the effectiveness of instruction for all students or tier one. Evaluation of current practices in tier one is important for two reasons:

First, it represents the first gate in a system designed to accommodate the diverse learning needs of all students. Thus, Tier 1 provides the foundation for instruction on which all supplementary interventions are formulated. Second, since Tier 1 focuses on all students, it is the most cost-effective means of addressing the population of learners. The subsequent tiers address the needs of fewer learners with additional resources. (Mellard & Johnson, 2008, p. 70)

To determine whether or not a school’s tier one instructional practices are effective and sufficient to meet the needs of 80% to 85% of the student population, several indicators must be examined. Mellard and Johnson (2008) suggested that universal screening measures must be in place, school-wide, so that data can be collected on the academic and behavioral progress of every student. This data can provide school personnel with essential information that can guide decisions for professional development and needed resources for delivering instruction (Mellard & Johnson, p. 72).

### Data-Based Decisions and the Problem-Solving Method

Tier two of the RtI model puts in place a system for intervening with students when the collected data shows that they are not responding to effective classroom instruction and are in need of more time and help to grasp basic principles and skills in one or more subject areas. Fuchs and Fuchs (2007) recommended “...schools use

universal screening in combination with at least five weeks of weekly progress monitoring in response to general education to identify students who require preventative intervention” (p. 16). This schoolwide systematic screening process provides initial data that may indicate a student is at risk for learning difficulties and struggles to keep up with his peers. If, through progress monitoring and the collection of anecdotal data there are indications of continued struggles, then a student is referred for the second tier of interventions. These interventions are developed to target a specific academic or behavioral skill. The research indicates that the duration of these interventions should last between eight and twelve weeks and be delivered in small groups, with regular progress monitoring to help school teams determine the effect of the intervention (Vaughn, 2003).

Mellard and Johnson (2008) suggested that tier two should consist of general education instruction plus specialized intervention that includes the following features outlined by Vaughn (2003).

1. Tier two instruction is provided in small groups, about two to five students, and is grouped according to area of need and skill levels to maximize resources and provide quality interventions.
2. Two indicators of performance are important: performance level and growth to monitor student progress toward achieving benchmark goals.
3. Progress monitoring in tiers two and three that takes place once to three times a week.
4. Tier two interventions should have a nine to twelve-week duration and can be repeated as needed in order to influence student performance.

5. Tier two interventions are typically provided three to four times a week, with each session lasting 30 to 60 minutes.

6. Instruction is conducted by trained and supervised personnel (and not by the general education teacher). For example, a qualified reading specialist or special education teacher would deliver a reading intervention.

The systematic process of progress monitoring exists in the RtI effort as a tool for routinely collecting and analyzing evidence of student performance. It is what lies at the heart of the RtI model. As teachers and school teams examine this data, informed decisions at both the classroom and individual level can be made as to whether a student is progressing or remains at risk (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006b). If, through the examination of this data teachers and school teams find that many of the students in a classroom or subject area are not performing to benchmark standards, then classroom instructional practices must be reviewed. If an individual student is not performing to standard, then careful monitoring of this student's progress must occur through data or student assistance teams, and specific interventions tailored to the student's needs can then be put into place.

Student assistance teams, or what are sometimes referred to as student success or teacher assistance teams (SST/TAT, etc.) have been implemented at every grade level for almost 20 years, and have been used to problem solve solutions and interventions for struggling students. An examination of the CMS student success team and how they were able to implement its precepts systematically on a school-wide basis is essential to this RtI case study and will be discussed more extensively in Chapters IV and V. These teams

have evolved from two primary sources. Chalfant and colleagues (Chalfant & Pysh, 1989) developed the teacher assistance team (TAT) concept, which stresses collaborative problem solving, general education teacher ownership, and immediate classroom assistance by placing the initiative for action in the hands of the classroom teacher, thus supporting the concept that response to intervention is a general education initiative. Although the process has been in existence since the 1980s, the TAT effort is still considered experimental and progressive. Witcher, Sewall, Arnold, and Travers (2001) implore educators to "...look critically at past actions and practices to see what now can be done differently to make learning more satisfying and effective" (p. 277). A limited review of the current literature on prereferral interventions and the use of the TAT have resulted in outcomes that are both positive and cautious in relation to these sources and their aims. Those teams that see the need for systems change in an effort to improve student services, are eager to match school programming to contemporary needs in order to make education meaningful and relevant to the interests and abilities of students. Concentration on abilities, accommodations and interventions matched to student needs should be at the core of these assistance teams and aligns nicely with the RtI model.

Much of the research recognizes that problem-solving entities, such as SSTs, serve an important function in that they help to delineate between the truly needy student, in reference to special education services, and those who simply need extra help to function with their peers at grade level. Thus, an examination of the research done in this area is significant to any discussion of RtI. Rock and Zigmund (2001) examine the purpose for intervention assistance reform efforts, like RtI, now sweeping the country

because of the reauthorization of IDEA and the No Child Left Behind legislation. They also ask important questions as to whether the results of these efforts concluded by research are substantive or symbolic. These are interesting questions to ask that cause both hope and discomfort. According to these authors, SSTs should be organized to operate under four guiding principles.

1. To ensure effective use of general education services for all students prior to referral to special education;
2. To establish building-based, teacher problem-solving teams to assist teachers;
3. To systematically screen students prior to referral for special education services using assessment and instructional techniques; and
4. To provide support and assistance to general education teachers serving students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. (Rock & Zigmond, p. 153)

Ultimately, these principles should provide a means and way for teachers to help students who are floundering and to support colleagues who are struggling to meet diverse needs, including those of the advanced learner, in their classrooms.

In the Iron School District where CMS is located, the student population is becoming increasingly diverse. In 1998, the percentage of minority students was reported at 6.4%. In October of 2005, that number had increased to more than 12%. It has doubled. Student Success Teams provide a familiar process for making changes in teaching practice that respond to this increased diversity as it pertains to student needs. Craig, Hull, Haggart and Perez-Selles (2000) have suggested that such teams can help teachers use instructional methods considered to be “best practice” in the field and that can encourage the type of self-awareness and shared inquiry that supports the academic success of all students (p. 7).

Now that the importance of assistance teams has been magnified by legislative

mandates and policies, researchers are beginning to ask important and hard questions that address the effectiveness of these teams in the past. Outcomes as they relate to student progress must be examined and measured by collecting data and making decisions based on that data. For this examination, three basic approaches most commonly implemented in the field are considered, and they all exist within the RtI model; they are instructional methods, behavioral strategies, and structural change. Both the general education and special education teachers seem to agree on the usefulness of SSTs and the examination of gathered data. They "...believe that intervention-assistance support systems reduce their feelings of frustration, helplessness, and isolation" (Rock & Zigmond, 2001, p. 154). Researchers contend that this isolation can be combated through collaborative efforts. Educators can work as partners and bring to intervention teams "...a complex interplay of talents and knowledge that come together at appropriate times to produce a commonly valued end result which no single party could ever have produced alone" (Coben, Thomas, Sattler, & Morsink, 1997, p. 428). Collaboration allows the team to engage in shared decision making based on data as they work toward a common goal: helping all students.

Some teachers are satisfied with the effectiveness of SSTs and the collaborative, problem-solving approach of the RtI model—others are not. Researchers have found that the more seasoned teachers are less likely to recognize the significance of interventions than their colleagues who have recently entered the profession. This phenomenon has been attributed to the recollection of negative experiences by the experienced teacher in contrast to a freshness and hopeful mindset found in those who are new to the profession



and whose thoughts are not jaded by failed attempts. This negativity is most often attributed to the fact that, in the past, responsiveness to intervention team members had not received proper training in conflict resolution and the use of effective instructional and behavioral intervention strategies. There have been some encouraging findings published over the last ten years that address this issue and suggest that with "...system and administrative supports [that] facilitate the ongoing implementation of intervention programs and the use of professional development funds for training, superior student outcomes have been achieved" (Safran & Safran, 1996, p. 363).

The knowledge base regarding these positive outcomes is mostly descriptive. Researchers of the past have described models that have proven effective in reducing referrals to special education, which can be a part of tier three as it is identified in schools using the RtI model. These descriptions summarize interventions and report levels of teacher satisfaction with the process, but there is a "... lack of a strong evidence base that results in improved outcomes for students" (Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, Lipsey, & Eaton, 2000). Kovalski (2003) responded to this limitation, by suggesting that the following attributes must be present for any problem-solving model to be effective.

1. A scientific approach to problem solving.
2. Interventions designed for an individual student based on scientifically validated principles of effective curriculum and instruction.
3. A system for continual monitoring/evaluation of intervention.
4. Collaborative relationships with general education and special education to develop, implement, and monitor the intervention.

5. Collection of information from a variety of sources, including teachers, parents, and others who best know the child.

6. Use of curriculum-based measurement to assist in problem identification and for continuing progress monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention.

7. Interventions embedded in the daily classroom routine so the classroom teacher takes responsibility for implementation.

Therefore, what is known about assistance teams is that they provide some benefits to students who are experiencing academic and/or behavioral problems, and their structure and intended purpose provide needed input and assistance to the RtI process including referral to tier three when tier two interventions prove to be insufficient. According to Mellard and Johnson (2008), assistance teams can make tier placement determinations, and the following options must then be considered:

1. Successful progress is made in the area of deficit and the student exits tier two to return to only tier one instruction.
2. Although progress is being made, the student's overall performance in the academic area (e.g., reading recognition, fluency) is still below that of his peers. The student remains in Tier 2 for continuation of the intervention.
3. The rate and amount of progress indicated by progress monitoring or the level of support required for the student is judged as significantly different from general education peers or is so intense that referral for disability determination is warranted. (Vaughn, 2003)

Many states and districts are choosing to use tier three for more time and intensity with existing tier two interventions or further supplemental services before referral for special education is recommended by assistance teams, based on the current response to intervention research. This is the process used in Iron County School District and CMS.

In many locations where this model is used, tier three is synonymous with special education and students are referred to these programs when tier two proves to be unsuccessful. Whichever method is chosen, the precepts and practices of tiers one and two continue. Progress monitoring remains essential and student assistance team meetings or individual education program (IEP) team meetings, depending on the method chosen, must remain in place so as not to lose sight of student progress or the lack thereof. Special Education is not a “life sentence.” RtI allows for and mandates fluidity within the system. If a student responds to tier three interventions with significant progress, then school teams need to decide whether or not he should remain in special education, or whether or not tier two interventions can help with continued progress and ultimately consideration for placement back in tier one.

Tier three interventions should:

1. be research based;
2. meet for a minimum of two 30-minute sessions each day for at least 9 to 12 weeks;
3. include at least one special education intervention cycle per semester that would typically include a six to twelve week period of interventions accompanied by evaluations and progress monitoring;
4. consist of instructional groups that contain teacher-to-student ratios of no more than one-to-three;
5. include continued progress monitoring and consideration of achievement toward IEP objectives;
6. a plan for students exiting special education intervention during the middle of the school year if they demonstrate grade-level performance on specified benchmarks or progress measures;
7. a plan that allows students who have received previous special education instruction but have exited, to re-enter Tier 3 as needed; and

8. interventions that employ a combination of direct instruction and compensatory strategy instruction designed to remediate a student's targeted area(s) of deficit. (Mellard & McKnight, 2006, pp. 24-25)

The three-tier model and system of interventions will, ultimately, provide essential information to special educators and related service providers that will prove invaluable in developing an effective IEP once a student is referred for special education services. Data will have been collected that can give a clear picture of student strengths and weaknesses based on actual classroom and small group performance. This is a component that is neglected and many times “left out” when schools choose to use the IQ discrepancy model for special education identification instead of response to intervention.

### Moving from Discrepancy to Response

Identifying learning disabilities through the IQ-achievement discrepancy formula method has been widely used in our country for the past 30 years. “[The] presence of an average to above-average IQ along with lower-than-expected academic achievement provided a way of documenting that a student could learn but was not learning” (Peterson & Shinn, 2002). Even though this process may sound logical and seem valid, there are now many years of recorded data that show it is not reliable (Chidsey & Steege, 2005). Studies surrounding the identification of specific learning disabilities related to reading difficulties have comprised the majority of the published literature in this area. An examination of these studies indicates that when comparing struggling students who manifested a discrepancy and those who did not, “...the IQ-achievement discrepancy scores neither [established] nor [confirmed] the presence of a learning disability” (Fuchs

et al., 2000 p. 2). Some of these studies have shown that the presence of a discrepancy does not mean that a learning disability exists. All of them "...have in common the finding that the nature of the intervention provided to all students is more important than the etiology or symptoms" (National Association of School Psychologists [NASP], 2002). These findings certainly support the RtI process, and the structure that its model provides is a move toward providing student services that are proven to be more valid and in-line with current studies and the law. RtI provides a means for intervening early, instead of waiting for a student to fail before services are provided.

In November 2004, Congress reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. RtI is specifically mentioned in this legislation as a viable and preferred means of providing a free and appropriate education (FAPE) to all students in the least restrictive environment (LRE). See Table 1 for a summary of the pertinent portions of this law. The definition of a specific learning disability (SLD) did not change from the original version passed in 1997. Like its predecessor, the 2004 legislation still includes a reference to "basic psychological processes" along with language that describes certain variables to be considered when determining SLD classification such as, "the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations." There is also reference to certain rule-out criteria in the definition that safeguard against improper identification. Students cannot be identified if the "learning problem...is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage."

Table 1

*Sections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 Related to RtI Methods*

Section	Excerpt
602	<p>(30) SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY</p> <p>A. IN GENERAL. The term “specific learning disability” means a disorder in 1 or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.</p> <p>B. DISORDERS INCLUDED. –Such term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.</p> <p>C. DISORDERS NOT INCLUDED. –Such term does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.</p>
614	<p>(5) SPECIAL RULE FOR ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION. In making a determination of eligibility under paragraph (4)(A), a child shall not be determined to be a child with a disability if the determinant factor for such determination is:</p> <p>A. Lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including in the essential components of reading instruction (as defined in section 1208(3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965;</p> <p>B. Lack of instruction in math; or</p> <p>C. Limited English proficiency.</p> <p>(6) SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES.</p> <p>A. IN GENERAL. Notwithstanding section 607(b), when determining whether a child has a specific learning disability as defined in section 602, a local educational agency shall not be required to take into consideration whether a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in oral expression, basic reading skill, reading comprehension, mathematical calculation, or mathematical reasoning.</p> <p>B. ADDITIONAL AUTHORITY.—In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures described in paragraphs 920 and 930.</p>

Source: Chidsey & Steege (2005).

Chidsey and Steege (2005) recognized that “what is different in IDEIA 2004 is the language found in section 614 of the law. Section 614 covers the evaluation procedures allowable for special education eligibility. Items 5 and 6 of section 614 include language specifically related to RtI practices” (p. 23). In these items, specific reference is made to the fact that “...a child shall not be determined to be a child with a disability if the determinant factor for such determination is...lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including in the essential components of reading instruction (as defined in section 1208(3) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] of 1965).” A similar requirement for both math and writing instruction are also mentioned in this document. Chidsey and Steege noted that

IDEIA 2004 references NCLB in stating that students cannot be found eligible as students with specific learning disabilities if they have not received scientifically based instruction, which, in the case of reading, includes the five components of reading included in NCLB. (p. 24)

To comply with this legislation, LEAs will need to show documentation that a student has had access to and participated in effective tier one instruction before being considered in need of special education. Documentation to this effect must now be included in every special education student’s file to meet the standards of federal law compliance. Every district in the state of Utah must show proof of this compliance through the Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS). If problems are found in this area, certain sanctions are place on the LEA until sufficient corrections in compliance are completed.

Finally, and most significantly in reference to any discussion on RtI and its relevance to IDEIA, NCLB and specific learning disability (SLD) identification, is part 6(B) of IDEIA. It combines or infuses the language of part 5 on scientifically based

instruction with RtI procedures. It stated, “In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, a local educational agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures.” Many states and districts use the word “may” in this document to justify a lack of movement toward using RtI. It is important to note that this part does not stand alone. In combination with the other components of the IDEIA reauthorization and NCLB, it serves as direction and a “...bridge between general and special education by referencing NCLB requirements in the law. [Lawmakers] have made clear the requirement that all branches and components of public education-general and specialized-use and report on data-based instructional practices” (Chidsey & Steege, 2005, p. 24).

Since this legislation is recent and RtI as a method to be used to comply with the law has, only recently, begun to gain momentum as a viable method for compliance, only a few studies have been completed that explore the effectiveness of RtI in relation to special education. Case, Speece, and Malloy (2003) conducted a longitudinal study and found that response to intervention helped to identify students with disabilities as well or better than the IQ-achievement discrepancy method. Fletcher and colleagues (2002) noted similar results in their research. Marston, Muyskens, Lau, and Canter (2003) collected data that yielded the same findings as the others in a study done in the Minneapolis public schools. All three studies were careful to differentiate between students with and without disabilities.

As noted previously, most of the work with RtI has thus far been done in the



elementary setting. This is also true with the use of RtI as a tool for identifying students with disabilities. Used in conjunction with the three-tier literacy model, researchers are finding that its procedures are allowing LEAs to identify students earlier and provide needed interventions. O'Connor (2003) reported that many students whose learning difficulties, not learning disabilities were identified in first grade, were able to be successful and develop similarly along with their peers in third grade. In research done at an even earlier stage with preschool students, Tilly (2003) found that by using RtI, special education placement was avoided completely.

As noted in the Florida Department of Education's Statewide RtI Implementation Plan, "one of the greatest impacts of the RtI model, is the reduction in over-representation of diverse student groups in low academic performance (e.g., FCAT Level 1), special education, suspension/expulsion, and alternative education" (p. 7). In Florida, where the student population is more diverse than in Utah, both referral rates and special education placement rates of minority students dropped approximately 40% in schools characterized by early identification, early intervention, frequently collected data, and evidence-based intervention (Torgesen, 2007). These are promising results.

Along with changes in intervention methods, changes in special education services delivery are needed to implement special education as it is outlined in an RtI framework, IDEIA 2004 and NCLB. This will require all teachers, both general and special education to receive further and continued professional development in these methods. Whether a school decides to use tier three as a vehicle for special education referral or a means for special education services, staff will need instruction and coaching

in order to effectively embed interventions in the daily classroom routine if they are to be held accountable for student outcomes and accurately measure student progress.

### From Theory to Practice: Professional Development and Leadership

Professional development and support for all school staff in the workings of RtI is the one component of the model that will make or break its success. As indicated in Figure 1, this component is placed at the base of Utah's model to signify its importance in providing a firm foundation for any response to intervention effort.

Successful implementation of RtI depends on the ability of general and special educators to use RtI reliably and validly. The reliability and validity with which RtI is implemented will be determined, to a great extent, by the quality of both the pre-service and in-service professional development models used to translate research to practice. (NASDSE, 2005, p. 39)

Timely response to individual student needs in a systematic way will be a new concept for many teachers, especially those who have chosen general education as a career. "For many, the core RtI model will be a significant paradigm shift (Chidsey & Steege, 2005, p. 139). To propose that school staff implement the RtI model without the continued support of relevant professional development activities and coaching to insure fidelity of services is setting-up any state, district or school-level RtI effort for failure.

Colleges and universities across the nation are beginning to catch the RtI vision and its relevance in today's schools. They are now offering courses to preservice special education teachers in the workings of RtI. Southern Utah University, located in Cedar City Utah, is one such University. Response to intervention is included in the curriculum delivered to educators looking to serve students with disabilities. Students are taught the

basics of RtI and their role in its implementation. As this effort expands, it will be necessary to also provide this information to teachers outside of the special education field. These prospective educators will need to know, before an actual teaching experience, not only what effective instruction looks like, but how they can respond when students struggle or when the curriculum delivered is not enough for students who excel.

To support this type of systematic structure, state and local education agencies will need to set in place a structure of staff development that is also systematic and ongoing. Teachers learn best and sustain changed practice when they are given “...opportunities to learn, discuss, and consult with each other about specific RtI steps” (Chidsey & Steege, 2005, p. 140). Collaboration and the development of professional learning communities (PLC) at the school district and site levels can support this type of structure. Educators need to share in the learning experiences offered by professional development within the context of a school community. “This means the power of social capital is being used in the service of learning for all...and the glue that links them is leadership” (Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006, p. 87).

Much of what has been researched and reported about RtI has been done within the confines of a controlled environment with generous allocations of funding and time. In a study conducted by the Learning First Alliance during the early part of this century, five school districts were selected based on the following four criteria.

1. Success in increasing student achievement in math and/or reading over three or more years
2. Improvement in student achievement across grade levels, races and ethnicities
3. A poverty rate of at least 25 percent, as defined by students eligible for free or reduced lunch

4. A reputation for effective professional development practices, based on recommendations from education leaders. (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 2)

The alliance took a look at systematic processes that promote student success: the same processes that are central to the RtI model. Embedded within this research is the importance of moving beyond the traditional “set and get” one-time presentation of skill development to a model that reflects coherence, organization and sustainability: all key to RtI implementation. The studied districts were able to connect district goals with site-based school goals and administrators took ownership of the process with district support. This alliance was able to identify five key elements that contributed to this success, (a) research based principles for professional development, (b) networks of instructional experts, (c) support systems for new teachers, (d) strategic allocation of financial resources, and (e) encouragement and assistance in using data.

District leaders firmly believed in the research on effective professional development, which, among other things, called for professional development practices to be data driven, to provide greater opportunity for collaboration among colleagues, to push for greater reflection on practice, to provide opportunities for continual learning, and to use learning strategies appropriate to participants. (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 24)

More research needs to be done which reports how building administrators are cultivating cultures of “...high expectations for students and teachers, and creating climates conducive to better teaching and professional growth (Crockett & Gillespie, 2007, p. 7). Building administrators will, ultimately, become the instigators of change for their schools. They will play a critical role in whether or not RtI is accepted and seen as a viable process for promoting student success and systematic change. Unless they move forward with optimistic caution and are open to having their school communities learn

and discover the processes touted by RtI experts together, change will be unnecessarily uncomfortable for all involved. “Perhaps the real test of success for RtI will be the ways in which principals develop people and mobilize change to foster intensive instructional effort from teachers—and how teachers respond...to the wide variety of ways in which their students respond to instruction (Crockett & Gillespie, p. 7).

### RtI Cautions

Many researchers are cautiously optimistic as they “...look for solutions to technical problems of measurement and validity, especially in using RtI in the process of identifying learning disabilities (Boardman & Vaughn, 2007, pp. 15-16). Although the majority of the literature looks at the structure of RtI as one that promotes school improvement and student success, several researchers have echoed the following caution given by Klingner and Edwards (2006):

[To] conclude that failure resides within students when they do not progress with certain interventions, and then move them onto the second or third tier in an RtI model or decide they belong in special education without considering other factors, is problematic. (p. 112)

Other areas of caution are found in discussions of fidelity and generalizability. There is a belief that experimental studies should be transferable from one educational or experimental setting to another. At times, the results from studied practices in one setting will not always transfer precisely to another. In educational settings where student and staff demographics can be varied, this phenomenon must be considered in regards to RtI implementation, and the research used must be tailored to meet the particular needs of each entity. “When results do not transfer, the assumption by some is that those

implementing the model did not use it correctly” (Klingner, Cramer, & Harry, 2006, p. 335).

As mentioned previously, students, staff and the entities involved in educational processes are varied and therefore RtI, as a model to improve student outcomes, must also vary within its defined structure to meet the needs of all involved. Those involved need to continually be engaged in discussions about what is working and what is not. Otherwise, RtI will succumb to the same fate of other school and student improvement models. It will be seen as “...old wine in a new bottle...[or] just another deficit-based approach to sorting children” (Klingner & Edwards, 2006, p. 115).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

This qualitative case study explored CMS's journey toward implementation of the RtI model. Yin (1994), defines case study as it relates to the research process. "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). To review, RtI is a "...systematic means of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress...to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and [using] data to [make] important educational decisions (NASDSE, 2005, p. 16). There are three main components to RtI theory. Chidsey and Steege (2005) identified them as connecting to a "big idea" about educational policy:

High-quality instruction, frequent assessment, and data-based decision making instruction is based on the idea that all children deserve effective instruction that leads to achieving functional skills. Frequent assessment is based on the idea that continuous assessment leads to skill improvement. Instructional decision-making relates to the idea that adjustments to instruction must be based on data (p. 11).

When the concepts and tasks associated with the problem-solving assessment model are combined with these big ideas, decisions about student goals, services and placement become systematic and less subjective.

This theory finds its roots in the effective schools research that came about in response to the equal educational opportunity (EEO) study, also known as the "Coleman Report," of 1966. This report was significant in that it suggested "...if one wanted to know about the achievement of children, one needed to look at the homes from which

they came, not the schools in which they learned” (DuFour et al., 2005, p. 177). If this report had gone unchallenged, then schools would have essentially become passive players in the education process. With response to intervention’s emphasis on problem solving and accountability, there is an implied provision or need for local and state education agencies to collect data and monitor the progress and achievement of all students systematically. School personnel “know” how their students are doing, and they are responding with appropriate scientifically researched interventions, when needed, based on a site-based plan of action.

Also, within RtI’s theoretical framework is correlation to the research on complex adaptive systems change. RtI, as reported previously, is a systematic process and cannot be implemented with integrity when only portions of the model are implemented. Complex adaptive systems (CAS) is not a single theory. Rather, it encompasses more than one theoretical framework and is interdisciplinary in nature. According to Holland (1999), “a CAS is a dynamic network of many agents (which may represent cells, species, individuals, firms, organizations, nations) acting in parallel, constantly acting and reacting to what the other agents are doing” (p. 12). When implementing RtI and building its infrastructure, processes become dynamic and change with the reporting of resulting phenomena and data. Key players and groups within the RtI model framework are working both in parallel and in collaboration with one another. When data are reviewed and processes examined, necessary adjustments are made to better facilitate the program and serve those individuals who are implementing its precepts (school staff) along with those they are serving (students and community). Holland also noted that



adaptation, communication, cooperation and specialization are key to successful systems change. Each of these attributes are evidenced in the recorded data of this case study that follows.

Though RtI, as a process, has been used in the public education system since the early 1980s, the focus of that implementation has been at the elementary level. Its precepts have only recently been accepted as necessary at the secondary level with the reauthorization of IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act) in 2004, and the support of its use in the NCLB legislation of 2002. At the secondary level, RtI is currently considered innovative in nature and “case study has proven particularly useful for studying educational innovations, for evaluating programs, and for informing policy” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). Therefore, it was important to study how one secondary school was able to take the theory and concepts behind RtI and implement them at this level, and then record the journey from the perspective of those responsible for that implementation, thus accomplishing what Yin described in his definition of case study.

Stake (1995) stated, “The case [study] is an integrated system” (p. 2). Response to Intervention is an example of such a system and therefore lends itself to such a study. The basic premise behind its valid implementation is that it should systematically work to improve student academics and behavior. Woven within this system is the support provided to staff and faculty to help ensure the success of implementation through consensus building and the provision of sufficient staff development. As noted previously, the research on RtI at the secondary level has been minimal. A case study that

is descriptive in nature was important to undertake in an effort to show others who may want to follow the path chosen by CMS, how one school was able to turn theory into reality.

The study and collected data is descriptive in nature, in that a journey was observed and recorded. Merriam (1998) noted the following:

A descriptive case study in education is one that presents a detailed account of the phenomenon [RtI] under study...they are useful...in presenting basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted. Innovative programs and practices are often the focus of descriptive case studies in education. Such studies often form a database for future comparison and theory building” (p. 38).

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the methodology of the study, including the participants, procedures, measures and analyses conducted. To review, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to (a) explore and record the processes involved in CMS’s journey toward effective implementation of the RtI model, (b) describe the school’s Student Success Team’s (SST) perceptions of factors associated with the intervention process, and (c) evaluate the success of RtI implementation at the secondary level from the perspective of each participant and determine the implications for practice.

### Participants

The participants in this study were selected based on their participation and involvement in the school’s RtI program at its inception and during implementation. Since, at the core of the study was the examination of the SST processes and perspectives, each member of this team was interviewed and observed on several occasions throughout the 2007/2008 school year: when this study took place. Their input

was critical to the study's look at CMS's journey. The school's SST is comprised of the following individuals:

1. Assistant Principal (1)
2. Special Education teacher (1 involved in SST)
3. ESL Coordinator (1)
4. School assistance team teacher members (6)
5. Community Council parent member (1)

The assistant principal served as the instructional leader who laid out the plan to team members and school staff. She accepted the responsibility of organizing the plan, delivering it to staff to build consensus and then, through questioning and logical inquiry the plan took shape and became this school's intervention reality. The special education teacher became the expert on the team in regards to testing criteria. Along with the SST, she was also key in identifying the tier two- and tier-three curriculum and then determining the standards for student placement within each tier. The ESL coordinator used her knowledge with the SIOP (Sheltered Instructional Observational Protocol) model to help with the placement of students with language development needs and to consult with teachers as to appropriate instructional strategies, beginning with effective instruction in the classroom and then moving to tier two and tier three strategies within the accepted curriculum.

The school administration felt it would be important to include a parent member who was active in the school's community council and volunteered in the study skills program. Her parental/community member perspective was valuable in that she was able

to see, first hand, the evolution of RtI in an actual school setting. One of her own children participated in the tier two reading intervention group, therefore she was able to not only observe the process, but her own student's progress as well. During the interview process, she noted that this experience prompted her to share, firsthand, her daughter's progress within the RtI process at CMS with her fellow Community Council members. The success story that she shared gave the council needed evidence so that school land trust funds could continue to be used to help with needed program supplies, equipment and personnel.

The team teacher members served in varying capacities. One of the team teachers served as the reading specialist, because of her training in reading instruction and assessment. Another served as the expert in data collection and analysis. There was also a member of the team who taught math and served on the team to give perspective as to how the literacy processes put in place this year would translate to numeracy in coming years. He also leant expertise in how deficiencies in reading may affect student problem-solving capabilities. The other four teacher members came from the science, social studies, physical education and performing arts departments. The importance of their perspectives will become apparent in chapters four and five as the particulars of the study are reported.

### Procedures

For a detailed explanation of the procedures found at the core of the RtI model, please refer to the description found in Chapter II. The purpose of this section and all

others in this chapter is to provide an overview of the data collection procedures associated with this qualitative group case study. As stated previously, the purpose of the study was to explore CMS's journey toward effective implementation of the Response to Intervention model. The central issue at hand in this case is that the school staff recognized a need to systematically intervene instead of using a "hit and miss" disjointed series of interventions that were not tied to the whole student and individual student needs. The decision to use a problem-solving model, as promoted in the RtI research, became central to the school's SST efforts. Their perspectives were most critical in describing the journey. They became the core of CMS's systematic, problem-solving effort.

### Observations

As part of the data collection process, all participants were observed during program and process development and organizational and training meetings. Critical to this infrastructure building were the following key meetings that were observed and recorded by the researcher.

1. SST participation in the 2007 Park City RtI Institute;
2. Follow-up organizational meeting in August to develop plan to restructure SST and present RtI as a process to help all students to the school staff;
3. Meeting to define RtI and build consensus among staff;
4. Data collection processes defined based on the use of the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI, 2001) to assess student comprehension;

5. Training in QRI administration and accepted use and practice;
6. Grade-level meetings to discuss criteria for student placement within the tiers and proposed tier curriculum;
7. After-school staff development training in effective research-based instructional methods for use in tier one; and
8. SST collaboration to plan for year two of RtI implementation

Table 2 depicts the timeline as RtI implementation events unfolded during the 2007/2008 school year. The particulars of these essential meetings will be outlined in chapter four as CMS's story is told. The emerging themes and their importance to the study will be covered later in the chapter with the resulting analyses.

Before deciding to move to the RtI model, CMS already had a positive behavior skills program in place. Students were being served, systematically and school-wide in this program. Therefore, it was important to observe this established process. Many students referred by staff to "skills" also had difficulties academically and were subsequently referred to the school's SST. Ultimately, this systematic process of intervening with behaviors served as a model for establishing the study skills portion of the school's RtI effort. Once established, observations were also conducted in this setting.

### Interviews

In addition to observations, each participant submitted to two interviews and attended a focus group meeting held at the end of the study. The interview questions were devised in an effort to capitalize on the knowledge and experiences that the participating

Table 2

*CMS RtI Implementation Activity Timeline*

Date	Activity
July 2007	Park City RtI Institute for Assistant Principal and SST
August 2007 week one	SST meeting to devise plan of action and restructure team focus
August 2007 week two	meet with CMS staff to present concepts of RtI and begin building consensus
August 2007 week three	SST met with reading specialist to define data collection process and identified the QRI III as the instrument to use
September 2007 week one	Teachers and paraeducators trained in QRI III administration
September 2007 weeks two through four	QRI III administered to all 877 CMS students
October 2007 weeks one and two	All testing data submitted to data specialist and graphed by classroom teacher
October 2007 week four and November week one	grade level meetings to discuss criteria for student placement within the tiers and proposed tier curriculum
December 2007 week one	Counselors, special educators and SST meet to look at student scheduling for tier three placements
December 2007 week two	Teachers contact parents of tier two and three students to discuss and explain the intervention process and individual student needs
January 2008 week two (second semester)	student schedule changes are made and students begin tiered instruction
January 2008 week three	After school monthly staff development on differentiated instruction begins
February 2008 week three	Second round of testing for all students completed
February 2008 week four	Data on testing collected and disseminated to grade level teams and student placement within the tiers is determined
March 2008 third week	Second round of after school staff development
May 2008 first and second week	Third round of testing for all students conducted and completed
May 2008 fourth week	(1) grade level teams meet to discuss testing data and student placement for the next school year. (2) grade level team leaders meet with high school team to discuss transition for students moving into the 9 <sup>th</sup> grade, (3) school staff meet to celebrate successes and discuss improvement for the RtI process in the coming school year

staff members brought to the responsiveness model and their emerging practices in light of this combined effort. The following questions were asked of each participant.

1. When did you first become acquainted with the terms RtI and SST?
2. Describe the training that you received in preparation to serve on your school's SST and to help with implementation of RtI. If you didn't receive any training, why and what occurred in lieu of training?
3. Describe any ongoing or follow-up training you have had. If there hasn't been any, what types of activities have you participated in to help support your RtI efforts and help you function more effectively as a team member?
4. If you serve on the SST, who participated in the initial development of your team? Are these members still functioning as a team or have the members changed?
5. What part have the special educators at CMS played in the development and ongoing RtI process?
6. What part have the general educators at CMS played in the development and ongoing RtI process?
7. What part have administrators played in the development and ongoing RtI process?
8. What do you see as your role in the RtI process?
9. What do you see as the greatest challenges you have faced with this process?
10. What do you see as the greatest success you have achieved with the RtI process?
11. How has the multi-tier model for intervention been used at CMS? What does



each of the tiers “look like”?

12. What do you see as the purpose of the CMS positive behavior skills program?

And what role do you play in this program?

13. What do you see as the purpose of the study skills program? And what role do you play in this program?

14. Do you see any crossover in the study and behavior skills programs in how students are served and data is used for making decisions in their behalf?

15. Is there any other information you would like to share that has not been covered in these questions?

In May 2008, a focus group was held with the study participants. The purpose of this group meeting was to debrief the RtI processes they had been involved in implementing and get a group perspective to use in concert with the individual interviews. Some of the same questions were asked that were covered in the individual interviews, but this was a less formal process in that individuals were encouraged to talk about their perceptions of how the school was affected, as a whole, in regards to the systematic nature of the model and the affect it had on the school climate. Their responses were recorded in the researcher’s journal and the prevailing themes were matched to other entries during the coding process.

The researcher’s journal was kept for the purpose of recording researcher thoughts and responses to informal conversations and district meetings where the concepts of RtI and other educational practices were discussed. It was also taken to state meetings with the Utah State Office of Education, to record RtI perspectives proffered by

others in the state that are tackling the issues of systematic implementation. This tool proved to be valuable in that it was an avenue for reflection apart from the formal data collected. It allowed for not only reflection on RtI implementation, but also notes on researcher biases. It was necessary to keep this in check because of the researcher's indirect involvement in the process at the district level. The central research question, along with the subset questions were written in the journal and referred to each time an entry was made. This was done in an effort to keep the entries focused on these questions. It is interesting to note that the themes found within this document closely matched those found in the responses recorded from interviews and observations. The issues surrounding RtI implementation seem to be consistent whether one is attending a meeting or listening to participants that are a part of a focus group. These issues or prevailing themes can be found in the coding schemes outlined in Tables 4 and 5 of the analyses section of this chapter.

#### Archival Documents and Data

Essential to the discovery process and collection of data was the examination of document samples and forms generated and used in CMS's journey. These forms and documents can be found in the appendices of this dissertation. Some of these documents existed before systematic processes were put into place, but many of them were either revamped to meet the new RtI standards or were added to accommodate new programs or phenomena.

The nature of this study was descriptive. However, data were kept and tracked

through the course of the study in conjunction with the systematic implementation of a three-tier literacy model's description, and it is important to include it along with the findings extracted in this study. Graphs depicting this data and a subsequent explanation of the perceived meaning can be found in Chapter V.

### Method of Analyses

Analysis of the qualitative data collected during the course of this study and described in the previous sections of this methods chapter, required ongoing reflection and interpretation of the spoken and written word, including the evaluation of all materials (artifacts, documents, pictures, etc.) that were collected throughout the study along with the field notes and transcribed interviews. The benefits of reflection in this process became evident as the analyses of all the data brought to light emerging themes.

The constant comparative method of data analysis was conducive to the CMS case study process. This method was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as the means of developing grounded theory, which

...consists of categories, properties, and hypotheses that are the conceptual links between and among the categories and properties. Because the basic strategy of the constant comparative method is compatible with the inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research, the constant comparative method of data analysis has been adopted by many researchers who are not seeking to build substantive theory.... (p. 2)

Whereas the intent of this study was to describe one school's efforts toward implementing an innovative program and not build a substantive theory, the constant comparative method was a logical choice for analysis. This method "involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Table 3 shows

Table 3

*Data Collection Reporting Matrix*

Data collection source	Collection dates	Purpose of data
Journal entries and mtg. notes	July 14 & 15, 2007	RtI Park City Institute SST Collaboration record
Observation/focus group	Aug. 9, 2007	Notes on staff initial perceptions of RtI and their place in the process
Observation/journal entry	Aug. 17, 2007	Notes on RtI staff organizational meeting for skills prog.
Observation/journal entry	Sept. 9, 2007	Notes on meeting with SST/Reading Specialist on the topic of appropriate assessments – QRI III
Observation	Oct. 16, 2007	Notes on meeting with Community Council and PTA when RtI plans and purposes were addressed
Observation/field notes	Oct. 18 & 19, 2007	Mtg. with all 6th grade teachers and 7th and 8th grade core teachers to discuss criteria for student tier placement & time out of class for tier 3
Observation/journal entry	Oct. 31, 2007	QRI III testing benchmarks discussed and set and testing data reviewed with each grade level team
Field notes	Nov. 6, 2007	Mtg. w/ SUU reading faculty and district literacy specialist on district RtI efforts and CMS structure
Observation/journal entry	Nov. 15, 2007	Staff meeting to discuss assessment processes and concerns
Observation/journal entry	Dec. 4 & 6, 2007	RtI collaboration meetings/teacher comments and insight on the process to this point in time; student tier data discussed
Observation/journal entry	Jan. 9, 2008	Staff development opportunity to train on tier 2 curriculum/Reading Rewards (2008) program/ multi-syllabic word strategies
Observation/journal entry	Feb. 6, 2008	Staff development on reciprocal teaching and correlation to reading comprehension
Observation/journal entry	Feb. 11, 2008	RtI staff development on tier 3 curriculum, Reading Horizons (2009) software and direct teaching strategies
Journal entry and archival notes	Feb. 28, 2008	PLC collaboration grade level meetings to discuss 2 <sup>nd</sup> round of testing that has been taking place and changes for next year's assessment calendar
Observation/journal entry/ focus group	Mar. 5, 2008	Staff perceptions on RtI now that they have been involved for 7 months

*(table continues)*

Data collection source	Collection dates	Purpose of data
Participant interviews	May 1-12, 2008	Individual interviews conducted/ questions outlined on pages 54 & 55 of chapter 3
Observation/journal entry	May 21, 2008	Staff meeting to review RtI data, standards of implementation and considerations for 2009

a matrix of the data and when they were collected along with their purpose in the study.

Once the data were compiled, they were then grouped together on a similar dimension. This dimension is tentatively given a name—it then becomes a category (Merriam, 1998, p. 18). This comparison process required the present researcher to find thematic concepts common to the interviews, journal entries, artifact collections and notes taken during conversations to establish themes that served as the basis for guiding the research. This process of comparison took place beginning with the first meeting that was observed and during the first interview conducted. This is where the term “constant” comes into play. Analysis began with the commencement of data collection and continued throughout the research process. Emerging themes were identified along the way. Once these themes were located and established, codes, or units of analyzed research material that provided a standard basis of data comparison, were assigned to specific dimensions of each perceived phenomena in an effort to place the data within categories. After the data were categorized and coded, the researcher took a second look at the data and then identified reoccurring axis points where data converged in regards to key concepts. These are reflected in the titles of Tables 4 and 5 that contain the named categories and the coded units juxtaposed with these categories. Table 4 displays the RtI efforts and accomplishments reported by participants and observed by the researcher. Table 5 indicates the challenges and barriers reported by the case study participants.

Table 4

*Coding Scheme for Reported and Observed Efforts and Accomplishments*

Category	Coding units
Establishment of a team	Leadership team Behavioral support Academic support
Needs assessment	School-wide data Observations Not otherwise specified
Consensus building	Staff attitudes Administrative tasks
Training	School success team training Staff training Professional development
Intervention	Positive reinforcement Common language Academic supports Behavioral supports Prepackaged programs (e.g., Reading Horizons) School-wide/systematic assessment Problem-solving/data-based decisions Other
Changes to school policy	School mission or goals School-wide rules or expectations Skills (behavioral and academic) referral procedures
Changes to school climate	General positive climate Changes to school-wide processes Changes to staff attitudes or behavior Changes to student attitudes or behavior Perceptions of progress Consistency among staff Other
Community resources	Partnership with district and regional literacy specialists Partnership with Southern Utah University language mentors PTA support Parent Newsletter

Table 5

*Coding Scheme for Barriers Reported and Observed*

Category	Coding units
Time constraints	Remediation and make-up program scheduling Scheduling of triannual assessments Teacher collaboration
Student scheduling	Advisory group periods tiered instruction and class displacement Transportation support
Multiple teachers	Collaboration efforts Student scheduling Consistency of placement standards
Multiple subjects	Coordination of curriculum goals
Support from stakeholders	Leadership team support Administrative support Staff supports Student support Parent support
Community factors	Increasing cultural diversity Transience of students and families
RtI program support	District support of effort School-to-school achievement reporting Monetary funding sources RtI trainings and conferences Technical assistance and follow-up Data reporting requirements

To analyze the content of the reported and observed efforts and accomplishments of the school-based team, the present researcher, as noted previously, generated coding units. A coding scheme was developed based on a review of the transcribed interviews, meeting observations, archival data and the researcher's journal. The final coding scheme contained eight categories, including the (a) establishment of a planning and support team, (b) assessment activities related to program organization, (c) consensus building activities involving administration and faculty, (d) trainings in response to intervention

and the systematic problem-solving team approach, (e) specific interventions implemented as an integral part of RtI, (f) changes to school policy or procedures, (g) positive changes to the climate of the school; and (h) community resources. Content analyses determined the frequency with which each coding unit was represented in the descriptive data.

To analyze the content of the barriers named by the school-based team and identified through observations, additional coding units were generated by the present researcher. The coding scheme contained seven categories, including (1) time constraints, (2) student scheduling dilemmas, (3) multiple teacher issues, (4) consideration of multiple subjects, (5) support from stakeholders, (6) community factors; and (7) response to intervention program support. The categories and coding units included in each category are listed in Table 5.

### Summary

The data contained in Tables 2-5, and the categories and coding units used, provided the structure for describing CMS's journey found in chapter four. Once the data were disaggregated to a point that reflected both the efforts and accomplishments and the barriers that were reported and observed, it was apparent that these two topics would become central to the discussion and reported case study. This data is also reflected in chapter five's report of how these phenomenon and findings provide insight into the implications for practice; not only for CMS, but for any secondary school who chooses to take the same journey.



## CHAPTER IV

### RtI IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS AT CEDAR MIDDLE SCHOOL

The purpose of this chapter is to describe a school improvement journey undertaken at CMS during the 2007/2008 school year, using the structure of a qualitative case study to drive the effort. The record of this process encompasses a year's worth of collaborative meetings and trainings that served as the beginnings of systematic RtI implementation. Telling the story of CMS's RtI implementation processes and sharing data gathered during their journey will accomplish this. The structure of a well-told story that uses a descriptive case study as the premise for its telling, allows for the presentation of qualitative data in an effort to provide a rich description of a process for interpretation. This description prompts the reader to follow a journey taken by the study's participants and then apply personal experience and perspective to the journey's processes and implications for practical application. The implications of this study will be discussed further in Chapter V.

To review, RtI is defined as:

The practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions. (NASDSE, 2005, p. 16)

RtI is referred to as a model, but the model is meaningless until its precepts are applied in a real school setting.

### RtI as a Choice for School Improvement

The first subquestion of this case study asked why CMS chose to employ the RtI model. Through observations, interviews and the examination of recorded field notes, the answer became apparent. They were intrigued by the concept of systematically putting in place a process for helping all students achieve academically and behaviorally. They knew that even with their current best efforts, students were “falling through the cracks,” and they saw RtI as a vehicle for moving school improvement forward to achieve the goals outlined in the school mission statement that follows.

Our quest for knowledge will be achieved by providing a quality education that empowers individuals to become caring, competent, responsible citizens who value learning as a lifelong process.

The CMS staff wanted this for all the students they served. RtI’s central theme of helping all students through data collection, regular progress monitoring and a systematic problem-solving team approach seemed to provide the structure for moving school improvement efforts forward.

### Cedar Middle School’s History

The climate for RtI implementation had already been established prior to the school’s decision, in 2007, to begin the collective journey. A brief historical background will be helpful in understanding this climate. In 2004, the Iron County School District Board of Education made the decision to realign school boundaries and change the grade level configuration of what was then, Cross Hollows Intermediate School. Previously, Cross Hollows served fifth- and sixth-grade students, and there was only one middle

school that fed into the two existing community high schools in Cedar City. To accommodate a growing student population that was precipitated by growth in this community, it was decided that the intermediate school concept should be abandoned and a second middle school established. This would allow a smoother transition from middle school to high school to take place for students, considering there were currently two high schools in existence. In addition, two new elementary schools were being built to accommodate growth, and there would be room to move the fifth-grade students back into the elementary school setting, which the Board felt would be best for students, developmentally. The sixth-grade students and staff would then become part of the current seventh- and eighth-grade populations to be served at the middle schools.

In 2005, renovations were begun on the Cross Hollows school building to accommodate the new grade configuration, and it was renamed CMS. The school and building previously known as Cedar Middle, was then renamed Canyon View Middle School, reflecting its association with the current Canyon View High School, located across the street from their campus. Thus, CMS was established and began its first year of service during the 2005-06 school year. At that time, the school's administration knew it would be important to create, from the beginning, a climate of shared ownership in the new school. They were bringing together a diverse staff of elementary/intermediate (sixth grade) and middle school (seventh and eighth grade) teachers. Each would come to this new environment with past expectations and beliefs about best practices, depending on their personal perspectives and experiences. These beliefs and perspectives would need to evolve into a common purpose for serving their current student population. The school's

principal and assistant principal constructed a plan of action to accomplish this task. As they met with teachers and staff, the seeds of a positive school community were sown through collaboration and consensus building. The mission statement, referred to earlier, and goals set to accomplish this mission were written, keeping the needs of all their students at the forefront of their planning and preparation. Unbeknownst to them at this time, they were also establishing a foundation for RtI.

When the CMS administration was approached in the spring of 2007 in reference to investigating the RtI model to help move their efforts forward, they were intrigued and willing to consider its methods. This is when the structure for this qualitative case study began to take shape and its central question was determined. “How would the process of RtI, which has predominantly been used at the elementary school level, translate to the secondary school setting for effective implementation of academic and behavioral interventions?” As mentioned in previous chapters, RtI has been used in the elementary school setting to promote gains in literacy through a three-tier model of service delivery, and the research indicates that it has been successful. Research at the secondary level is thin, and direction from state education agencies as to how it should be implemented is mostly theoretical. Pockets of agencies, throughout the country, have been working on statewide RtI implementation since the 1980s in Iowa and, more recently, in Florida. As noted previously, these efforts are the exception, rather than the rule.

Currently, the State of Utah does not have a RtI blueprint in place. The USOE has promoted RtI concepts since 2004 with the reauthorization of the IDEA, when RtI was named as a preferred method to identify students with disabilities within this law.

Since this time, RtI has been more aggressively promoted through the USOE and the Utah Personnel Development Center (UPDC), an arm of the state office of education that provides, promotes and supports professional development in the field of special education and special programs. Their efforts have been helpful in moving districts forward through professional development opportunities and support services. In fact, it was during one such UPDC RtI training held in Iron County School District in the spring of 2007, that the administrators and SST at CMS first heard about RtI and began to have conversations about the feasibility of the model working at their school.

In an interview conducted with the CMS assistant principal on May 8, 2008, she noted that during the UPDC workshop, she kept thinking that the concepts being presented were abstract. There were no concrete answers or suggestions for “how” RtI should or could be implemented. “I felt the concepts made sense and that there were possibilities for our school, but I went away with more questions than answers.” This administrator needed these answers, and she needed more direction on how to get them. It was at the Park City Institute on RtI in July 2007, where she began to formulate those answers along with her school SST. This is where they began to develop a vision as to the direction they needed to go and the way they should look at the process.

The institute introduced the school team to individuals like Dr. David Tilly from the Heartland Institute in Iowa, who had experience working in schools with RtI implementation. One team member stated that, “he gave practical ideas on data collection and using data to drive our decisions about student needs for intervention and also some hints for making our Student Success Team more effective in this process.” The assistant

principal at Cedar Middle noted that Dr. Tilly's handouts for this presentation served as templates for staff discussions at CMS that were held in the fall of 2007 (see Appendix A). The other members of the SST also found this institute helpful, and noted that it presented a paradigm shift in how they would, in the future, begin meeting the needs of all students.

The administration and SST had the remainder of the summer of 2007 to consider how they would drive the RtI effort forward at CMS. Then, in August of that year, they came together and began to address the questions posed in this case study. This study's central question addresses the feasibility of implementing RtI in a secondary setting and the team determined that yes, it would not only be possible, it was the next necessary step in moving school improvement efforts forward. Once this determination was made, the team was ready to tackle the "how" questions and begin developing a plan to present RtI as a system of school improvement to the entire CMS staff. This is where the sub questions of the study, when explored and answered, help to define processes and answer the "how" of schoolwide, systematic RtI implementation as it would unfold at CMS.

### Current Practices and Closing the Achievement Gap

The second sub question listed in the introduction asks, "What practices and strategies did CMS implement on a schoolwide basis to help students succeed academically and behaviorally?" It was important to begin this effort by taking note of what was already in place at the school. First, their current leadership team (SST) needed to be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of each member and their commitment to a

process like RtI. This team's past focus and purpose needed restructuring under the premises of RtI. Each member's role in RtI implementation would become critical at every stage of development. CMS's assistant principal noted that, "the previous SST was not functioning in a way that would help RtI efforts. We knew that we needed to move toward a true problem-solving model and away from the practice of meeting together to gripe about what was happening or not happening and then not moving forward to try interventions in each student's behalf." The Cedar Middle SST had been functioning under the premise that they were solving student issues, but the data used was mostly subjective and there was no real structure to their efforts. Therefore, the assistant principal recognized that specific data needed to be considered during team meetings so that they could provide legitimate interventions that would be evaluated for effectiveness through ongoing progress monitoring and data collection.

The diagram depicted in Figure 2, shows the problem-solving model used by the school's SST and later adopted by Iron County School District as part of their district RtI Blueprint (see Appendix S). The implications of this blueprint will be discussed further in Chapter V.

Further, CMS's administrators knew that before they could implement RtI systematically, they would need buy-in from all essential stakeholders, and they would need the collective knowledge that would come from developing shared leadership opportunities among their school community. Implementation of RtI could not be viewed as a mandated administrative initiative. To help insure the success of this move toward shared leadership, it became apparent that the new SST needed to be comprised of the

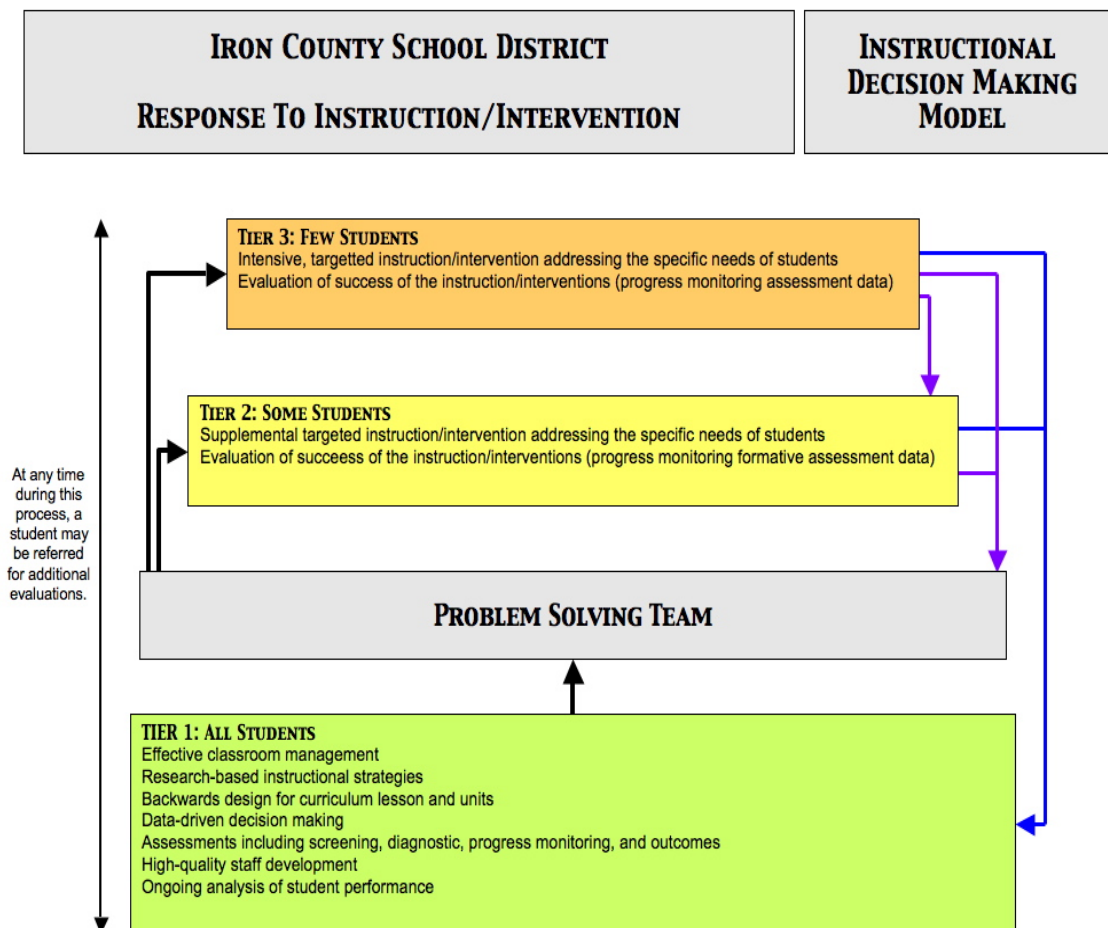


Figure 2. ICSD RtI instructional decision-making model.

“movers” and “shakers” of the school: those who could be counted on to provide the positive leadership that would bring the CMS staff together and build consensus.

Administrators took a look at the current members of the team, and decided to make some changes. The special educators in the school worked with all teachers and staff.

First, past experience in the problem-solving team approach was considered. Next, it would be important to include those who would be excited about RtI and the new roles that would need to be established for individuals and the team, as a whole. The following



were identified to serve on CMS's problem-solving team (SST).

1. Assistant principal
2. Resource department chair
3. Sixth grade reading specialist
4. Seventh grade math specialist
5. ESL site coordinator
6. School counselor
7. District assigned psychologist (as needed)

Each team member stayed on the team during the first year of implementation and then continued into the second, which proved critical to providing continuity through the initial implementation of RtI.

Once these team members were identified, their first task was to determine what was already working at CMS in regards to student services and effective interventions. Identifying these components would allow the team to then bring the entire CMS staff together to begin consensus building and determine a plan of action. The school's ESL efforts, basic reading and math classes, skill building study hall classes and after school at-risk and accelerated studies programs were all identified as existing programs that were considered to be successful and worth continuing. It was noted by the team that each of these services and interventions is student centered, and has as a purpose the goal of meeting individual student needs, but they existed independently of each other. They needed to be brought together so each would become part of a system of services that could be accessed by all staff and students, depending upon assessed need.

As previously mentioned, a culture of shared ownership in the educational processes at CMS had already been established. Agreement about what was important school-wide had already been reached. Now, consensus would need to be gained to bring programs and staff members together to more tightly unify school improvement efforts under the RtI umbrella. CMS administrators knew that if they wanted RtI to be sustainable, ownership needed to be accepted by everyone working at the school. In retrospect, these administrators admit that this was the most difficult part of RtI implementation. The task, at times, was daunting. Not that they did not believe they were up to the challenge, but student improvement and program improvement was dependent on their ability to accomplish significant systemic change. Administration wanted RtI to be “our” effort and “our” program.

When asked about the challenges they met in moving toward a systems change with RtI, most respondents, including administrators, admitted that it was that there was no pattern to follow. Evidence that a secondary school had traveled this road and recorded their efforts so that their path could be followed, could not be found. One school administrator commented:

I was going to have to, along with my team, find our way with only a suggested abstract process to follow and no concrete, tried and true steps to take...I needed to have a clear vision and come-up with a proposed process to implement. My SST was a big help in bringing more definition to my mind as far as direction goes. They helped to fill-in the blanks that I needed in order to bring it all together before I took it to our staff.

It is important to note that although this was the greatest challenge, school administration’s recognized success came from dealing with and working through this challenge. They were able to establish a vision and embed it into the school action plan

(see Appendix B). The assistant principal noted that this allowed teachers to see how RtI fit into what they were already doing with school improvement and then ask critical questions that would lead to "...filling-in the potholes along the way." The following introduction to this action plan sets the stage for RtI efforts in recognizing that it will take collaboration and a common purpose to achieve their goals during the school year:

We intend to fulfill the mission of our school by utilizing Professional Learning communities that are dedicated to doing what is best for children. The staff understands the specific needs of today's young adolescent, and we intend to use this expertise to enhance student progress. Our unified faculty and staff are passionate in supporting each other with a single focus in mind, that being "success for everyone". With the transition that has taken place, we have established a baseline that will guide our future decisions. (Appendix B)

This statement, along with the school's comprehensive action plan for 2007-08 was introduced and discussed during CMS's faculty retreat held on August 9, 2007.

### Building the RtI Infrastructure

Following this introduction to RtI concepts and dialogue on meeting the needs of all students through systematic school-wide processes, a follow-up SST meeting was held on September 27, 2007 to discuss the parameters for further consensus building and program focus. The reading teachers from each grade level were invited to attend so they could give input and provide expertise. At this time, it was decided that CMS would use *Utah's 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction* (Appendix C) as a guiding document to establish the school's RtI model. Concentration on improving reading would drive their systematic efforts during this initial year of infrastructure building and implementation. The sixth-grade reading teacher was so intrigued with the concept of RtI that she took it

upon herself to do some extensive research in collaboration with the school's resource department and district elementary reading specialists. They concluded that the focus at the middle level needed to move from students "learning to read" to having them "reading to learn." They recognized that the reading curriculum focus at the early elementary level is in helping students to decode, read fluently and understand the vocabulary associated with language. As students move into the upper grades of elementary and then into middle school, the focus then changes to comprehension so that students begin to understand content and take meaning from text. This team determined that comprehension skills should be the emphasis of systematic school-wide assessments to collect the necessary data that would determine student placement within the tiered structure of RtI.

### Assessment and Student Placement

Common assessments such as the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS, 2006) and Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR, 2008) tools were discussed. Scores from DIBELS were available on the Iron County School District's student achievement management system (SAMS). This tool would be somewhat problematic in that the data was not always updated and available before students moved from the elementary to middle school. In addition, there was not district-wide consistency in the elementary schools in testing all fifth-grade students. Some schools only tested and monitored the progress of students considered at-risk and below grade level. Cedar Middle's SST and reading teachers were adamant that they should know where every

student was, in regards to reading ability as they entered the sixth grade. They wanted to know which students were at-risk, which were at grade level and which were reading above grade level. They needed to identify an assessment tool that could be given to every sixth grade student within a reasonable amount of time, so they would have data from which to make sound decisions about placement within their 3-tier model as soon as possible.

Further, the DIBELS assessment, as it is being used in Iron County School District focuses on fluency. Students are benchmarked and placed within the elementary three-tier structure based on initial fluency, letter naming fluency, phoneme segment fluency, nonsense word fluency and oral reading fluency. Scores from this tool have proven to be accurate measurements of a student's reading ability, especially in grades K-3. As mentioned earlier, the CMS team knew from their classroom experience with middle school students that they needed to be reading to learn, and comprehension would be a key indicator as to whether a student could be successful in all their classes at the middle level and beyond. Team members also felt that the STAR, which primarily assessed vocabulary and word recognition was lacking in the ability to give teachers an indication of student comprehension ability.

The CMS resource teachers had experience using the QRI-III (2001) assessment tool with the students they served. They felt that the comprehension portion of the QRI-III could be used to test all 877 sixth- through eighth-grade students in a reasonable amount of time. Each test would take approximately 25 minutes and would provide a grade level score that could be used to determine tier placement. After the sixth-grade

reading teacher did some extensive research on the QRI-III, the SST came together again with all of the CMS reading teachers on October 18, 2007 to discuss the findings and plan for the critical initial RtI presentation that would take place the following day.

During this meeting, it was decided that they would present the QRI-III assessment as a viable option to the CMS staff and then get their feedback. A plan was outlined as to how and when they would train CORE teachers (language arts, social science, math and science), paraeducators and volunteer staff in administering the QRI-III if they obtained staff consensus for its use. Besides assessment, the following items were also discussed pertaining to the new role of the SST.

1. Data-driven problem-solving focus instead of “gripe” session.
2. Determine criteria for support and student referrals to behavior and academic skills programs.
3. Determine special education referral standards and the collection of intervention data prior to referral.
4. Determine behavior interventions that the SST can consider before student referrals to tier two and the Skills program.
5. Departments should be the first line of intervention in problem-solving issues as a team before students are referred to the SST.
6. SST will meet at a predetermined time weekly, unless there are no issues or students to be considered in an effort to promote consistency.
7. The SST should be involved in the whole RtI process; determining program implementation strategies and tiered intervention placements, not just facilitating the final

problem-solving meeting.

### Building Consensus

With the role of the restructured SST defined and a common focus for initial implementation agreed upon, it was time to take the RtI model and vision to the CMS staff. On October 19, 2007, the staff met before school. The assistant principal, who took responsibility for moving this initiative forward, presented RtI to the staff and facilitated a discussion about its possibilities for systematic school and student improvement using a prepared power point to drive the discussion (see Appendix D).

This presentation gave a basic overview of the history and guiding principles behind RtI. The sixth-grade reading teacher also presented the results of her research on middle school level reading needs and the possibilities for assessing these needs. She discussed her findings on the significance of addressing comprehension skills and indicated that the most valid assessments in this area were those that were passage-based like the QRI and the Direct Reading Assessment. For the most part, teachers agreed with this philosophy and thought that it would be helpful to know whether or not students were able to comprehend text and content based on a common assessment. Interview respondents noted that this initial exposure to the RtI concepts and the need to focus on comprehension made sense. Teachers, as mentioned previously, knew they had students who were “falling through the cracks” or as the presentation indicated were “...floating in a sea of ineligibility between general education and special education.” Implementation of RtI would systematically provide tiered interventions to those students

who were not at grade level but did not qualify for special education. As one seventh-grade language arts teacher noted, "...it would provide a means for intervening before determining that a student needed to be evaluated for a possible learning disability."

The core of this presentation centered on the essential need for assessing every student in the school three times a year, and even more often when students were receiving tier two and tier three interventions. The collected data would show progress or the lack thereof. Teachers and the school SST would use this data to determine whether or not the interventions should be discontinued and the student moved back to tier one and the regular classroom setting. Conversely, it would also indicate if a student needed to continue with the prescribed intervention(s) for a longer period, or whether the intervention(s) should become more intense. This concept helped most of the teachers to see the process as systematic, and that educational decisions for all students would become the property of all staff, not just individual teachers.

During the course of this meeting, there were some staff members who needed to have questions answered and their concerns addressed before they could weigh the benefits with the discomfort of the change that the RtI process would bring. Most of these teachers were concerned with the logistics or the "how" associated with RtI. As they later noted during the interview process, their concerns were validated in this meeting. Each perceived barrier was addressed with logic and referenced to the RtI research by the presenters and other members of the SST. This made the movement toward change palatable for them. The following are comments made during this initial presentation that showed these concerns and the need for further understanding.



“So, what will the “help” look like?”

“If we know students are doing well, do we still assess?”

“I know where my kids are just by working with them.”

“Couldn’t we just use classroom assignments, quizzes etc. as data to show progress?”

“I feel like too much time will be spent testing when I could be teaching.”

“Who will do the assessing? Will I be testing my own students? Will others help in the classroom while I am testing?”

“How are we going to start, and how are we going to do this with everything else we do?”

“When would the tier two and tier three interventions take place?”

“Is there a computer-based-test that would mirror the QRI-III, the STAR or what students would be tested for on end-of-levels (criterion referenced testing administered to all students, grades 3-12, at the end of each school year)?”

Sensitive to staff concerns, the assistant principal validated each comment. She recognized and noted that, “...it was because these teachers had a desire to meet the needs of every student that they wanted the answers to the ‘how’ questions.” Arguably, the two questions that were most important to moving the RtI implementation forward were, (a) was it really important to assess all students, given the fact that teachers already “knew” how their students were doing based on their performance when reading out loud in class, and (b) what would the “help” for students look like? Most of the other questions were in one way or another embedded within these two. Understanding that response to intervention is first and foremost a systems change that includes meeting the needs of all students, not just those who are at-risk academically, is tantamount to a successful program. Until the staff at CMS determined student needs based on data gathered from the same assessment delivered with fidelity to every student, school teams and individual

teachers would only have a subjective idea or perception of where these kids were. To move students forward, they would need a baseline that would show where every student currently was performing in regards to reading comprehension. They could then monitor progress and provide interventions based on the gathered data.

By the end of the October 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, teachers, for the most part, were onboard with the process and it was determined that they would use the comprehension portion of the QRI-III as the tool they would employ to benchmark every student at CMS. The resource department was assigned to train the staff and other identified personnel and volunteers on how to deliver the assessment. This training took place over the next two weeks and teachers began assessing students November 1<sup>st</sup>. The goal was to have this process completed before the Thanksgiving break, so that when the staff returned they could look at the data within their grade level teams. These teams could then determine what the tiered interventions would look like and which students would need to participate in these interventions based on their QRI-III scores.

### Initial Assessment and Benchmarking Processes

Considering the student population of 877 students, this was going to be a time-intensive task. To ensure all students were tested during this 3-week testing window, the resource teachers made themselves available to help teachers accomplish this testing goal. The local regional education center, Southwest Educational Development Center (SEDC) helped by sending over their reading/literacy specialist to assess students. Southern Utah University education students involved in student teaching at CMS at this

time were also trained in the QRI-III administration. They not only helped with the testing, but also facilitated class activities, which allowed teachers more time to assess. At this point in the journey, the special education team worked closely with the assistant principal to organize paraeducators and volunteers to facilitate the testing of all students. These individuals were assigned to teaching teams or grade level PODS as they are known at CMS. Assignments were based on the expressed needs of each teacher and teaching teams. Classroom teachers took a close look at their curriculum for the three week QRI-III testing period. Based on the possibilities of having paraeducators and volunteers facilitate classroom activities, teachers then scheduled their time for testing students accordingly. When they were needed in their classrooms to teach, students were scheduled to complete their testing with either a trained paraeducator or one of the special education teachers. The resource department orchestrated all of this scheduling. One of the barriers that occurred, according to one of the special education teachers, was that there were two teachers who procrastinated getting their schedules to the resource department and therefore they had to scramble to get this teacher's students tested within the 3-week period. It was noted that only having to do this for two teachers out of the entire faculty "...wasn't bad." They would work with these teachers during the second round of testing in February to make sure this did not happen again.

#### Initial Data and Student Placement

Once the testing was completed, the scores were gathered and the resulting data compiled. Staff teams then were able to determine the "how" part of implementation. The

first step was to plan and conduct grade level RtI collaboration meetings. These meetings were held on December 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of 2007. The assistant principal and SST developed a schedule for these days. Roving substitutes were then hired to take teacher's classes while they attended these meetings. During this time, grade level teams met throughout the day to review the collected assessment data and determine the criteria for student placement in tier two and tier three. The following represents the items covered on the agenda each of these days.

1. Review of compiled student testing data
2. Discussion on tier placement criteria
3. Tiers two and three curriculum and who would deliver the curriculum
4. Discussion of when interventions should take place
5. Parent involvement and notification

It is important to note that the SST data specialist collected the student test scores from each teacher and then graphed student data based on their performance at the QRI-III instructional level (see Appendix E). Several of the teachers, after reviewing their student data, commented on how they were surprised by some of their student's scores. Based on how students read during class, they assumed that they were able to comprehend at or above grade level. One teacher noted, "one of my students, that I thought was doing well, based on her reading fluency during class activities, scored low on the QRI-III and showed that she was functioning below grade level." This type of recognition caused teachers to go back and take a look at these student's past assignments and test scores. With few exceptions, the comparison of these indicators showed that there was an

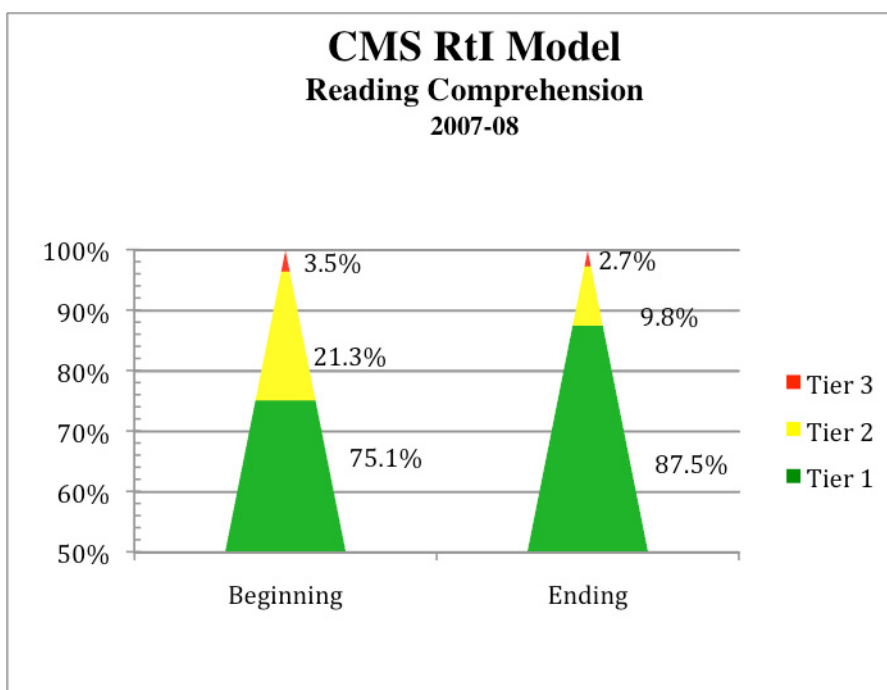
apparent disconnect between perceived fluency and the ability to understand or comprehend the core content. This recognition also helped to validate to teachers that all students needed to be assessed to help determine ability. The aforementioned comparison of the assessment results and student performance showed that these fluent students were struggling with content. One teacher commented that, “It certainly will be much more time consuming to test every student, but I don’t want to make incorrect assumptions about ability based on what I ‘think’ I know.”

As each team looked at the QRI-III scores for their students, they made preliminary decisions as to what would constitute appropriate student placement within the tiers. During the sixth- and eighth-grade level discussions, the teams decided that if students were functioning at the fifth-grade instructional level or above, their reading needs could be met within the classroom or at tier one. If they were at a third- or fourth-grade instructional level then they would be recommended for tier two placement. If the test scores showed them at a second grade instructional level or below, they would need to be placed in the more intensive tier three interventions. The seventh grade team’s tier placement determinations varied from the other two in that they felt that students who were at a third grade instructional level or below, should be considered for tier three placement. After seeing that the other grade level teams had chosen the second grade instructional level as appropriate for tier three, they decided that they wanted to be consistent school wide and would change their decision on tier three placements to the second grade level as well. This ability to look at the data and then come to consensus based on cross-team collaboration was a positive sign for the CMS administration and

SST; teachers were catching the vision of the RtI process and the importance of school-wide systems change.

### Student Achievement Evidenced in Collected Data

The visual in Figure 3 shows the percentages for student placement within the CMS three-tiered structure based on the collected data and team decisions on tier placement—both at the beginning of implementation in December 2007 and then again at the end of the first year efforts in May 2008. Response to Intervention research suggests that in effective RtI programs where the efforts are school-wide, 80-85% of the student population should have their educational needs met in Tier one or the general education classroom. Tier two should be made up of 10-15% of all students and tier three should



*Figure 3.* CMS RtI beginning and ending reading comprehension data.

include no more than 3-5%. The initial numbers for CMS show that their school population and the way they divided students based on the initial testing data are close to what the research indicates these percentages should be. Tier two is larger than it should be in the beginning, before systematic interventions were initiated, but by the end of the school year in 2008 the percentage is well below the accepted norm. Tier three is also below the accepted number and the tier one population is well above the 80% mark.

This initial data has been encouraging to the administration and staff at CMS. Movement within the tiers should be fluid and this data indicates that through their intervention efforts, the CMS staff was able to meet the needs of a significant number of students to the point of moving them out of tier two and into tier one: more in line with the acceptable percentages associated with a successfully functioning RtI program. The implications of the ending data to future CMS response to intervention efforts will be discussed in Chapter V.

Table 6 shows the actual numbers represented in this chart and the improvement percentages.

Now that the staff had actual students identified and could look at the numbers, they were ready to discuss what the possible staff development needs for tier 1 might be, in an effort to increase the number of students who could have their needs met within the general education classroom. They also needed to decide on the curriculum to be used in tiers two and three and when students would receive the interventions. Finally, they needed a systematic process for informing parents about the RtI process and the possible changes to their student's schedule.

Table 6

*CMS Reading Comprehension Student Improvement Percentages (2007-08)*

Grade	Beginning	Ending	% Improvement
Tier 3 enrollment			
6th	14	10	28.6%
7th	11	9	18.2%
8th	6	5	16.7%
Total	31	24	22.6%
Tier 2 Enrollment			
6th	81	27	66.7%
7th	74	50	32.4%
8th	39	10	74.4%
Total	194	87	55.2%
Total enrollment			
Students	877	887	
Tier 3	3.5%	2.7%	
Tier 2	21.3%	9.8%	
Tier 1	75.1%	87.5%	

## Tiered Instruction and Student Placement

First, it was decided that in an effort to meet the needs of more students within the regular classroom, or tier one, after-school staff development needed to focus on differentiation of the curriculum. The CMS staff had already been introduced to the concepts of differentiation through district-wide efforts. The ideas were not new to them. Differentiated instruction, as a teaching theory, is based on the premise that content, process or pace should vary and be adapted in relation to individual and diverse students in classrooms. Several of the teachers were already employing differentiation techniques in their classrooms. These teachers would be called upon to share what they were doing



with the rest of the staff in three planned meetings to be held after school during the months of February, March and April of 2008. There was a consensus among the grade-level-teams that this would be a good first step and they would come together at the end of the school year to determine how this worked and the direction they needed to go during the 2008/2009 school year to continue with this differentiated curriculum focus.

Next, possibilities for tier two and three curriculum were discussed. The resource teachers had been using a couple of programs that they had found successful for the special education students they served, and they were considered the experts in this discussion. For tier two, they suggested the use of the Sopris West published curriculum entitled *Reading Rewards* (2008). This program uses various reading comprehension improvement strategies appropriate for small group settings. It also has a fluency component that is tied to increasing comprehension skills. The school had already purchased several of these programs, so there would be no added cost. Also, within the structure of tier two and on a more limited basis tier three, the teams felt that the current CMS study skills program that students were already being referred to based on recommendations from the SST, would meet the criteria for appropriate interventions at these levels. Referral forms and criteria for study skills placement would continue to be accessed as in the past (see Appendix F).

Continuing with the tier three intervention choices for curriculum, the SST decided to use the *Reading Horizons* (2009) computer-based curriculum. This program focuses on phonemic awareness and basic decoding and fluency strategies. Students would work in small groups (two to three students) and individually with the curriculum

facilitator to improve basic reading skills. Again, this was a program that the resource teachers were familiar with and were currently using with their students.

The third point of discussion centered on what was to become one of the most difficult determinations of the infrastructure building process. The teams needed to find time, within the regular school day, to provide the chosen interventions. The following were points of consideration: were there preferable subjects that students could be taken out of to provide needed reading interventions? How long would students need to be taken out of identified classes, and could this process be made fluid so that if a student showed significant gains before the end of any given quarter, they could return to their original classes and be successful? Who would re-work student schedules? To address the first of these issues, teams began to prioritize subjects according to whether or not students were required to take an end-of-level test in that subject. Secondly, they evaluated whether or not there was a significant literacy component in the considered subject. According to these teams, the most logical classes to replace with interventions were the Arts and the Family and Consumer Science and Technology (FACT) courses. It was the teachers of these courses that, without exception, decided students would ultimately do better in their classes if their reading skills were improved, and they supported the final decision to place students in tier three interventions during the time they would have participated in these elective courses. The implications and outcomes of this decision are recorded in Chapter V. There certainly were reservations voiced by the staff about the need to address the needs of the whole child and give them exposure to a rich and varied curriculum. Ultimately, most indicated that they would be doing students

a disservice to send them on to high school, where the curriculum and standards would be more difficult, without addressing their needs in reading.

Next, it was decided that the school counselors, in collaboration with the tier two and three intervention teachers would rework student schedules to ensure that the least amount of disruption in the student's school day occurred. Lastly, it was again the arts and family and consumer science teachers, along with the intervention teachers and SST who determined they would work together to decide with each individual student the best time to transfer back into previously scheduled classes from the tier two intervention. This decision would be based on monitored student progress within tier two and what was happening within the regular classroom at the time of the considered transfer.

#### Parental Notification and Involvement

The final consideration during these meetings was how to explain RtI to parents and more specifically to the parents whose students were identified as needing tier two or tier three interventions. The collaboration teams recognized the need for consistency in the delivered message and that it would be important to include parental input in their processes. The school had included a parent from their community council from the beginning, and used her input along with that of the sixth-grade reading teacher in developing a script that teachers could use when calling parents that would give all of the essential information and allow for them to ask questions if they needed (see Appendix G). Along with contacting parents by phone, the team also felt it would be essential to provide parents with some ideas of how they might support RtI at home. This prompted

the same sixth grade reading teacher to put together suggestions for parents to promote the improvement of fluency, comprehension and decoding skills and also increase motivation as they worked with their students at home (see Appendix H). The school principal showed his support of RtI by putting RtI updates in the monthly school newsletter and an RtI informational brochure was sent to every student's home (see Appendixes I and J). Finally, the SST knew that parents would like to know how their students were progressing. One of the tier two teachers consequently developed a Response to Intervention Report Card that would be sent home after progress monitoring was completed (see Appendix K). In an interview with a parent participant who also volunteered with testing and in the Study Skills room, she commented that, "...as a parent with students participating in tier two interventions, it is comforting to know that their individual education needs are being met. They are receiving help based on data, and the fact that the teachers are keeping me informed of progress all along the way is wonderful."

### Collaboration Results

Much was accomplished during these collaboration meetings on December 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Critical decisions were made in regards to process and how the CMS staff would work together to promote student progress and improved achievement. Ownership in the RtI process at CMS was solidified because of increased staff and parent involvement. The next step would be to reconvene the SST. Before the staff left for winter break, they met and, led again by the assistant principal and special education teachers, the team

made decisions as to student placement within the tier two and tier three programs. They discussed how much time would be needed within each of these groups. It was decided that tier two could be done during the DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) silent reading time two times a week for 45 minutes. The school's ESL coordinator commented, "We have our students read silently for 30 minutes three times a week. Couldn't we use this time to have students, in need of small group instruction, meet in tier two interventions?" Many on the staff noted that tier three would need to be more time intensive. Based on the arts and family and consumer science teachers' previous input, they agreed that students would need to be taken out of one of their elective courses until they progressed sufficiently to move to tier two and back to their previously scheduled class. The band teacher said, "I'm "ok" with that. These kids need to have the basics." It was also determined, at this time, who would teach the curriculum and monitor student progress within the tiers. Two of the resource teachers would take the tier two students and the other two would facilitate tier three. One of them noted, "We already use these intervention programs with the resource students. It just makes sense that we are the ones who deliver the curriculum." Criteria was then established for the amount of progress necessary before students could return to tier one from tier two and also what progress would be necessary to step down to tier two from tier three.

The next task for the SST was to meet with the school guidance counselors when they returned from the winter break the first week in January. At this time, they developed a form to organize student placement within tiers two and three (see Appendix L). Once the groups were established, the student lists were given to the classroom

teachers so that they could contact parents using the aforementioned developed script. It was also decided at this time that intervention groups would begin meeting the third week in January 2008. Knowing that they would continue to identify students throughout the year, they also constructed a SST referral form and list of viable classroom interventions that teachers and administrators would use when they had significant concerns about student progress. The team used the current special education intervention form as their template, and made a concerted effort to include all of the essential components of this document so that the one new referral form could also double as file documentation if a student was referred for special education services in the future (see Appendix M).

During these discussions with counselors, the current school behavior skills program kept surfacing. The team recognized, from experience, that students had behavior issues that stemmed from academic and social interaction deficiencies. They determined that the behavior skills program should also be considered as a tier two intervention. This program has existed at the school since its inception; therefore, schedules, forms, and criteria for student placement, performance, and reentry to the regular classroom were already established (see Appendix N). This recognition again helped the CMS staff see that they already had some effective intervention procedures in place, and that RtI implementation was helping to bring cohesion to existing processes. In a focus group held at the end of the 2007/2008 school year, the school's assistant principal commented that, "for optimum student progress, all CMS intervention programs are interconnected and focused on providing students with individualized remediation as effectively and efficiently as possible; thus, returning the student to the regular classroom

in a timely manner.”

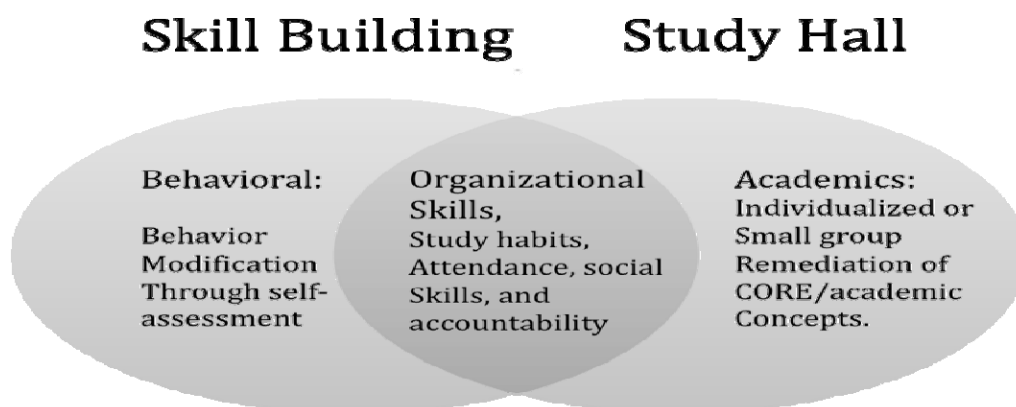
Both the Skill Building and Academic Study Hall programs were key components of CMS’s continued RtI efforts. They share common goals for student success, and they address specific behavioral and academic needs of students through intensive remediation outside the regular classroom. Figure 4 shows the commonalities.

True to the RtI model research, as students demonstrate substantial improvement of their deficiency, they return to the regular tier one classroom environment where they continue to practice newly acquired skills while being held accountable for their behavior and/or academic progress.

At the conclusion of this meeting, a draft of the CMS RtI 3 tier model and a diagnostic standard treatment protocol that portrays the connection between initial universal screening and placement within the tiers had been developed. It was ready to be taken to the staff during their January 28<sup>th</sup> faculty meeting (see Appendices O and P).

The staff then met in their departments on this date, and were given an agenda

*Providing essential tools for student success!*



*Figure 4. Skill building/study hall diagram.*

with specific survey questions to address concerning development of testing protocols and a proposed timeline that would accommodate their school-wide needs (see Appendix Q). From this agenda, each group developed answers and a plan that was then submitted to the SST. Proffered suggestions and answers to the agenda questions were then compiled (see Appendix R). This compilation was then examined and discussed by the SST, along with the assistant principal and department chairs. Based on this discussion the team constructed an RtI Reading Model Assessment Timeline. This timeline outlined the RtI standards, described a three-year progress monitoring of students based on the testing data and identified the assessment tools to be used and when those assessments would be given.

The most consistent of concerns expressed in the aforementioned survey was that of time spent in assessing every student. Several teachers commented that they felt there could be alternate ways to obtain the essential information needed. The SST determined that these concerns could become obstacles to sustaining RtI, if they were not addressed satisfactorily and in a timely manner. In an effort to decrease the amount of time testing all students during the second of the three QRI administrations, the team decided, based on input from the SEDC literacy specialist and Southern Utah University Elementary Education department professors, that they would give the silent comprehension portion of the test. This could be done with entire classes at the same time. Thus, teachers would not need to adjust their curriculum to be out of the class for 3 weeks like they did in November during the first testing window. Loss of teaching had been the main concern expressed by departments in the aforementioned survey. They would only need to set



aside one day to assess, and then paraeducators and the resource department teachers could facilitate testing those students that had been absent.

### Professional Development

During this process of collaboration and program and infrastructure building, staff development on differentiation was also taking place at after school faculty meetings, as was decided back in December. The first of these sessions was held on February 11, 2008. The agenda for the afternoon included a brief discussion of the tier two curriculum that students placed in tier-two intervention groups had already begun. The special education teacher who was facilitating this tiered instruction led this discussion. She acknowledged the developers of the program and explained that the basic premise was to work with students on multi-syllabic word reading strategies. She then gave a brief description of the process, and explained how individual student goals for letter recognition, fluency and comprehension mastery were determined. An outline of specific lesson activities was also discussed.

The second part of the afternoon was spent with one of CMS's social studies teachers instructing on reciprocal teaching. This is a research-based instructional strategy that promotes differentiation of the curriculum (Palincsar, 1986, pp. 19-20). Briefly defined, it is an instructional activity that takes place in the form of a dialogue between teachers and students regarding segments of text. The dialogue is structured by the use of four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting. The teacher and students take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading this dialogue. The purpose

of reciprocal teaching is to facilitate a group effort between teacher and students as well as among students in the task of bringing meaning to the text. The other two staff development sessions focused on the following topics.

1. Developing phonemic awareness and phonics skills in emerging readers
2. Making all kids fluent readers
3. Comprehension strategies for developing readers
4. Developing vocabulary in the middle school classroom

Each of these topics continued to support the strategies of differentiation during tier one classroom instruction. Teachers from every grade level participated in sharing what was working in their classrooms. Several of the teachers who participated in the end-of-year focus group commented on how beneficial these meetings were. “Suggestions for doable strategies were given; so I felt comfortable trying them in my classroom the next day with the curriculum that I already had planned.”

### Participant Thoughts and Perceptions

With a shared vision, consensus on proposed infrastructure and processes in place, and efforts toward continued implementation and development occurring, many teachers were feeling more secure and confident in their combined efforts. There were still some concerns being expressed by a few teachers, but the language of RtI was becoming familiar and its precepts were being connected to current practice. The evidence of orchestrated chaos, struggle, and positive outcomes could be found in responses given during interviews and actions observed during meeting observations.

When asked, “What do you see as the greatest challenge(s) you have faced with this process?” the following responses were given.

“Finding funding sources to implement great ideas.”

“Being able to catch the vision and wanting to know how.”

“Hearing a few teachers making negative comments about how this was just another program.”

“Huge time commitment for testing and communication issues with volunteers and paraeducators.”

“Not having enough help sometimes to implement all I wanted to do in tier two.”

“Helping teachers understand that being out of the classroom is necessary.”

“Adjusting my schedule and managing my time better.”

“Time intensity for testing students and gathering and publishing data.”

“Defining my role and finding a balance between managing and mentoring.”

“The ‘real’ work of scheduling trainings and preparation of materials for implementation in such a short amount of time.”

“RtI takes lots of work and effort. It took me out of my comfort zone.”

“Being able to match instruction to student abilities in each tier”

Confronting negative attitudes, managing time and workload along with communication issues amongst the entire faculty, seem to be central to the real and perceived challenges. Each of these will take time to work through and resolve, and comfort in the process will only come through continued resolve and effort. Much of this resolve will be accomplished as student outcomes are shared through problem-solving efforts that result in increased student achievement. Evidence of this resolve can be found in the responses to the question “What do you see as the greatest success you have achieved with the RtI process?” The following are samples of those responses.

“Students who have participated in the tiered interventions do what they need to do and then they don’t return.”

“Seeing the connection between students becoming responsible for their own behaviors and then performing better academically.”

“Seeing students return to my band class after participating in tier two better prepared and motivated to do well musically.”

“Finding struggling students and being able to help. They progress significantly in tier two and then are able to tell their parents about their progress during SEOP meetings. They are proud of their accomplishments.”

“Seeing kids jump two and three grade levels in their reading comprehension abilities.”

“Few students served in tier two stagnated. Most improved at least one grade level.”

“Two students with the significant disability classification were able to improve two grade levels. Previously, my kids were not given the interventions because of perceived inability to learn. Attitudes are changing.”

“Seeing less and less of the ‘dumb kid’ attitude in students.”

The prevalent message found amidst these responses is that students are experiencing success, and in some cases, this has led to increased teacher effectiveness and improved positive behaviors in students, according to school administrators and the SST.

### Celebrating and Future Plans

During the final RtI staff meeting held on April 23, 2008, these challenges were discussed and successes celebrated. It was also a time of debriefing on the RtI processes of securing consensus, infrastructure building and implementation. Data were reviewed and considerations and additions for the 2008/2009 school year were discussed.

At the end of April 2009, the administrators brought their staff together for the

final time to discuss and debrief their RtI school improvement efforts and the data associated with these efforts. Review of basic implementation standards and considerations and additions for the 2008/2009 school year were the topics that drove this discussion. Central to the discussion on implementation was that any future RtI programming decisions that were made needed to always be linked to their school systems. Operating in isolation was no longer a part of their school culture. Several teachers, as evidenced in the earlier recorded interview answers, were still trying to understand why all students needed to be a part of RtI and more specifically the assessment and progress monitoring components. It was determined that administrators and other staff members who had not struggled with this concept would need to continue to reinforce the importance of knowing where every student at the school was both academically and behaviorally. This was the only way to ensure that students did not continue or begin to fall through the cracks. The argument was made that other schools in the district only assessed and progress monitored those students that continued to be at risk of falling further behind. The school principal countered this observation by addressing the need to tailor their RtI efforts to CMS's specific goals and needs. When they began this journey, they had come to the consensus that it was important to follow the progress of every student so that no matter where they were academically and/or behaviorally they would be afforded the opportunities to improve. It was now critical to remain unified on testing procedures to maintain data integrity and make accurate decisions for student placement. Most staff members agreed.

Further comments were made about how difficult it was to justify taking so much

time testing students. One teacher suggested that yes, there had been several components to this implementation process that had been difficult, but he appreciated that they were working to find solutions and not “giving up.” At this point, teachers began to share success stories about increased awareness not only on their part, but also in regards to parents and students: awareness of where they were academically and the strategies and tools that they now had at their disposal to combat deficiencies.

This conversation on assessment led to the second part of this debriefing and focused on considerations and additions for next year’s efforts. Possible solutions for addressing the time-out-of-class issue voiced by teachers were as follows.

1. A revised testing timeline for 08/09 that would begin in September instead of October/November so that beginning data could be delivered to the data teams the week of Labor Day. The second round of assessments for seventh- and eighth-grade students would be given during the second two weeks of December and the data delivered to data teams to be compiled the week before they went on Winter Break. The third and final QRI for sixth-grade students would be done the last 2 weeks of February and the first week in March and the data given to the data teams by the end of March. Then grade-level teams could look at scores and tier placement before the end-of-level testing began the middle of April.

2. Teachers must test to the frustration level when administering the Oral QRI in order to have an accurate instruction level representation.

3. During the 08/09 school year, the SST and administration will research the Group Reading Assessment and Diagnostic Evaluation (GRADE, 2009). Current thinking

is that this tool might be able to replace the silent QRI that the school is using. It can be given to an entire class at one time and would save hours and possibly days in time spent testing. It is a normative diagnostic reading assessment that determines developmentally what skills students from Pre-K through 12 have mastered and where they need instruction or intervention. It is touted as being scientifically researched and is being used in a few districts in the northern part of the state.

4. Depending on the outcomes of the GRADE research and determination, the current STAR testing may be eliminated.

5. The current RtI paraeducator will assume more responsibility for testing individual students next year.

6. Based on the collected data next year, the staff felt that they might want to reconsider the current criteria for student placement within the tiers. "Do we want to raise the bar?"

7. The SST will look at school facilities to designate quieter areas for testing.

8. The SST will continue to work toward becoming a true problem-solving team. An emphasis for next year will be in following-up with teachers as to the effectiveness of tried interventions and student progression within tier one.

In the area of communication and parent involvement there were two concerns expressed as to improvement for the 2008-09 school year. First, administrators reiterated the importance of keeping parents informed during the RtI process. The school's principal noted that, "I only had two negative calls with our RtI process and both of them were from parents who felt like they had been left out of the loop and weren't kept

informed.” He suggested that notification should always be given before students are placed in tiers two and three, and that parents should be provided with “a description of the interventions and their purpose.” Several staff members commented that the tier instructors should give a copy of the intervention progress reports to parents as well as the classroom teachers involved. The principal committed to “continue giving RtI information and updates in the school newsletter” and the assistant principal said she would “keep the school’s Community Council informed as to program changes and collected data.” She noted, “this will be important as decisions are made during council meetings about appropriate land trust expenditures and linking those allocations to RtI and school improvement efforts.”

As the staff continued to discuss possible RtI program improvements for next year, the tier three instructor and ESL coordinator, who also teaches language arts, proposed that they develop an English acquisition language arts course that all of the ELL students who were at the pre emergent, emergent and intermediate levels as defined by the state, would take in place of a regular language arts class. This would allow the school to satisfy the 45-minute a day requirement for these students in language acquisition and give focus to the tier-three efforts of this population. When they looked at the enrollment in tier three for the 2007-08 school year, the majority of these students were ELL, thus justifying the development of the added ESL course. The rest of the faculty felt this was a good “next step” for their tier three programs.

Finally, this debriefing discussion addressed proposed topics for the 08/09 school-wide professional development focus. Most of this centered on the need for teachers to



become more knowledgeable and experienced in the curriculum delivered in the tier two and tier three intervention groups. Several teachers felt that they could use the literacy strategies and concepts associated with these programs with all of their students.

Incorporation of phonemic awareness, comprehension and vocabulary curriculum into their lesson plans would only help to reinforce what students were learning in tiered instruction. This would provide an added element of practice within the regular classroom for students and help students to generalize what was being taught in intervention groups. The tier two and tier three instructors were given the charge to work with the assistant principal and reading teachers to put together next year's staff development curriculum.

Along with this need for further instruction in the tier curriculum, it was also suggested that more training on delivering the QRI would be helpful. Some teachers were feeling more comfortable than others in their ability to administer this with full integrity. In order to provide an added measure of validity to the testing data, all staff would need to experience the same level of comfort while testing students. The resource department offered to conduct a survey of staff involved in assessing students. Based on the input provided by the survey, they would then design two to three professional development sessions focused on testing administration for both the QRI and the new GRADE assessment tools.

The final agenda item proved to be a time of celebration for the CMS staff. The assistant principal, who directed a good part of the RtI implementation efforts, shared the resulting data as depicted in Figure 3 and Table 6. The fact that the combined efforts of

the staff led to a 12.4% gain in student needs being met within tier one and the regular classroom was significant. This realization then prompted teachers to begin sharing anecdotal data about specific students that they worked with and the improvement that was achieved. Stories about parents who were calling administrators and teachers to thank them for efforts in their student's behalf were also related.

The assistant principal concluded this meeting by thanking each member of this staff for their hard work and continued support of the RtI school improvement efforts. She asked if the teachers, as a whole, felt that this hard work had been "worth it". Although there were a few remarks that showed two teachers, in particular, still had reservations about the process, there was a preponderance of responses affirming that their efforts needed to continue. When asked to show by a raise of hands whether or not they should continue and even "ramp up" their efforts, every hand came up. Some of these were probably a result of peer pressure and not wanting to be the negative voice in the crowd. However, the administration and SST were encouraged by the support. Based on the comments made during the focus group held earlier in the month with this team, they were ready to make the suggested changes, work through whatever barriers would arise, continue to collect data and tackle the second year of implementation.

## CHAPTER V

### STUDY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to proffer some conclusions based on the collected data and analysis of that data within the current CMS qualitative case study setting. The following is a review of the study's central question and subquestions:

1. Would the RtI process successfully translate to the secondary school setting?
  - a. Why did CMS choose to employ the RtI model?
  - b. What were the existing perceptions of RtI amongst the study's stakeholders?
  - c. What practices and strategies did they implement on a school-wide basis to help students succeed academically and behaviorally?
  - d. What were the obstacles to implementation?
  - e. What are the implications for implementation?

The latter three of these subquestions serve as the basis for this chapter's discussion with an emphasis on the implications for future practice at the school, and within the Iron County School District. As reported in chapter three, analysis of the data collected during the interview and focus group processes and a review of the field notes collected during key meetings and critical conversations, revealed that CMS's RtI implementation efforts could be categorized as either an accomplishment or a barrier to program implementation. What is important to note is that some of the barriers proved to be catalysts for future accomplishments. These two factors will be embedded in the current discussion. The structure of this chapter will be shaped by briefly reviewing key data

recorded and discussed in chapters three and four. Following this review will be a reporting of the efforts and changes in practice within each of the three tiers and will conclude with an overall summary of the study's implications for further research and practice.

### RtI Implementation Results at the Secondary Level

First, and central to the case study, was an examination of whether or not RtI, as a systematic process implemented in an effort to meet the educational needs of all students, could be successfully implemented at the secondary level. As noted previously, response to intervention as a multi-tiered system for delivering literacy-focused services at the elementary level, has been working in schools and districts throughout the country for more than twenty years. The literature presented in chapter two of this study indicates that the research surrounding this effort has reported significant gains in student achievement through the collected data. A model for service delivery that is based on the needs of secondary schools and the students they serve has not yet been developed, other than scattered research indicating that the prospects for success have been noted and there will continue to be challenges to face that are unique to the secondary school setting.

CMS needed to examine their current practices in regards to RtI implementation, and determine whether or not the attributes proffered by Kovalesski (2003) and listed on pages 30 and 31 of this study were now a part of the school's culture for serving students. These attributes essentially promote using a scientific approach to problem solving, implementing interventions designed to meet individual student needs, developing and

implementing a system for monitoring progress and then bringing the data together in a team environment with critical stakeholders to make informed educational decisions in behalf of the individual student. Each of these attributes are discussed in the findings that will be presented in this chapter.

Although the primary intent of this study was not to measure the effectiveness of RtI efforts at CMS, it is important to examine the preliminary data collected by the school as an indicator of whether or not implementation is not only possible, but is a viable consideration as a necessary “next step” for secondary schools in their school-wide improvement efforts. Administrators and teachers at the middle school level need to know that their hard work and effort is paying off in increased student performance and measured readiness for the high school experience.

As reported in Figure 3 and Table 6, CMS was able to show student progress and movement within the tiered structure, which indicates their initial efforts focusing on reading comprehension improvement, made a difference in individual student achievement. By recording student progress, as measured by student QRI comprehension scores administered three times throughout the school year, CMS was able to move 12.4% of the students who were initially identified as needing tier two interventions, back into the tier one structure of the general education classroom. These students progressed sufficiently to have their educational needs met in the regular classroom without the need for small group instruction. In addition, .8% of the students who were placed in the tier-three intervention class were able to move out of this group and into the tier-two structure to have their literacy needs met in a less restrictive environment. As outlined in Chapter

IV, students placed in tier three were taken out of an elective class so that they could participate in the intervention class everyday for one full class period.

### *Tier Three*

At the beginning of CMS's RtI implementation during the second quarter of 2007-08, a few of the teachers who taught elective courses expressed concern with the practice of taking students out of these classes. In the end, the general consensus was that if students became better readers, their performance within their elective courses would more than likely improve. During an interview conducted with one of the school's band teachers at the end of the year, this point was validated. He stated, "Two of the three students that had been taken out of band during the third quarter and placed in the tier three class, were able to return to band 4<sup>th</sup> quarter based on their progress in tier three." Upon their return, he noticed, "They came to class better prepared and their performance in class improved significantly. He noted, "These student's daily attendance rates increased, and their classroom behavior and grades improved."

During the final focus group held in May of 2008, this topic was broached again in a group setting. Without exception, the improvement that teachers and counselors saw in the students who returned to elective classes after participating in tier three, far outweighed the inconvenience of not having them in class for a couple of months and having to make adjustments to student schedules. As one teacher expressed, "It was hard adjusting classroom groups to accommodate students being taken out of class for tiered instruction, but when they returned, it was evident that they were more involved in class activities and had more confidence to "speak up" during discussions." Scheduling was

identified, initially, as a barrier to implementation, and the school's SST and administrators considered these comments to be positive reinforcement that the new RtI practices for tier three placement were not only being accepted, but would continue to be supported.

Another implication for future practice not only at CMS, but also for Iron County District and perhaps others who choose to implement RtI school-wide and district-wide was identified as a result of placing students with significant cognitive disabilities, when appropriate, into the tier three class. Students, who had previously been considered "unreachable" in regards to their capacity to learn to read, were given a chance to work with a reading endorsed teacher and prove their capabilities. Browder and Spooner (2006) noted:

We have little information about predictors of future reading success, yet we know that there are large individual differences in children's responsiveness to reading instruction. In addition, we do not have a complete picture of the rate at which students with significant cognitive disabilities can be expected to master phonics and other reading skills. There are also gaps in knowledge related to the optimal amount of practice required to master skills and how these translate to support a student reaching his or her optimal reading level. (p. 103)

The two students from the severe disabilities class, who were identified for placement in tier three, had been classified as having an intellectual disability; using state and federal guidelines and evaluation results. According to the student's special needs teacher, "both of them made reading level progress during their time in tier three." In previous years, such progress had eluded them based on the above-mentioned gaps in educators' knowledge about appropriate service intensity. The measured progress, in part, was the result of giving these students the opportunity to work intensively everyday with a

reading teacher. “I was not a reading teacher, so my skills were limited,” admitted the special needs teacher. “The progress of these two students was motivation enough for me to get my reading endorsement so that I could help others.” She recognized that placement within the tier three structure and classroom gave them the opportunity to go beyond their perceived abilities. Their recorded improvement provides the necessary data to move all schools in Iron County toward including, when appropriate, students with more significant disabilities and needs into the tier three classroom. As CMS moves toward implementing RtI with math this coming year, they will be extending these services to these same students and collecting data on their progress to share with district schools.

Further examination of the data surrounding CMS’s tier three efforts indicated that 92% of the students identified, also qualified for ESL services under the standards recognized by the federal government and supported by the state of Utah under Title III. This realization prompted the school’s ESL coordinator to go to the tier-three teacher, who was also a resource teacher at the school, and discussed how they might better meet the needs of this student population. The Title III federal guideline suggested that students identified, as ELL through state developed evaluations, must receive a minimum of 45 minutes of English language acquisition instruction daily. Until this point in time, CMS had organized a study hall for ELL students, but the primary focus of this class was not language acquisition, it was geared toward helping students complete homework and class assignments and instruct them in organization skills. While these activities were beneficial for the students enrolled, they did not teach them the English language, and



more importantly the academic language that would help them to succeed in school and become more culturally acclimated in their communities now and in the future.

This discussion led to the idea of combining a tier three literacy program for ELL students with their required Language Arts core instruction. The ESL coordinator is also a language arts teacher, and, therefore, has the ability to differentiate the core based on student language needs. The tier three teacher will work in tandem with her to meet student literacy needs using the ESL component of the tier three curriculum. Data were collected during the 2008-09 school year to gauge the success of this effort and then shared with the district ESL coordinator so that the implications for practice in other district secondary schools could be determined. The combining of these efforts was the most significant change that CMS made in their tier three structure. More collaboration and specialized curriculum delivery based on the current student population needs, moves the school toward a more systematic RtI process. The CMS staff looked at the data and then made student-centered decisions: a clear indicator that the problem-solving model included in chapter three of the current study is being used within the structure of the school's tier three efforts.

### *Tier Two*

As previously reported, students were placed in tier two interventions based on the results of the first QRI score they earned when initial benchmarking was completed school-wide during the month of November 2007. Grade-level teams determined that all students who scored between at the third and fourth grade levels on the comprehension portion of this assessment would be given 20 minutes of small group instruction each day

during silent reading time (DEAR). The intervention teacher and assigned paraeducators used the *Reading Rewards* (2008) curriculum for the core of their instruction, and student progress was monitored bi-monthly. Based on recorded and sustained improvement, the SST then determined whether or not a student could be moved out of the tier two interventions and back to the regular class activities. End-of-year data showed that 12.4% of these students were able to move out of tier two. This brought the school's percentage of tier one students into the research-based acceptable range of more than 80% having their educational needs met within the general education classroom.

As teachers met together with school administrators, they were given the opportunity to debrief the RtI process, specific to the tier two efforts. As a whole, they recognized the significant student gains and celebrated anecdotal data related to the shared statistics. They determined that students who may not have been considered to be struggling with reading previously, were identified and served because of the school-wide testing of every student. Along with stories of success also came the expression of continued concerns and frustration about the amount of time it took to do these assessments. Many could not reconcile the out-of-class time with student gains. One staff member said, "I know we have experienced success, but I still feel guilty being out of class for such a long time testing each student. Can't we find a better way? Isn't there a research-based testing tool that we can give our whole class at one time?"

As they began to consider possible solutions for their concerns, it was evident that the school would need to find a more streamlined process for testing all 877 students in the future. After meeting with reading experts at Southern Utah University and doing

some research on assessments that could be given to an entire class instead of one-on-one, they found a viable alternative to the silent QRI and would use the GRADE tool beginning in the 2008/2009 school year.

Further, CMS has collaborated with their feeder elementary schools to articulate the need for testing every fifth-grade student during the final quarter of the school year. This data can then be used to determine sixth-grade student placement in the middle school before the first day of school. The tier two groups can be organized based on incoming student needs. This change in the process would mean that the 6<sup>th</sup> grade core teachers would only need to test students who may have missed the fifth grade end-of-year testing or had moved into the district after the spring testing date(s). The GRADE assessment would then be given midyear, which would only take one full day of class time. The final assessment would be given using the help of resource teachers and trained paraeducators the beginning of April before end-of-level testing began. The group estimated that this could be done within a week's time. These proposed changes would mean that the time out of the classroom for teachers would go from approximately 12 to 15 days to 5 days.

The same types of considerations were made with the seventh and eighth grade teachers. Each grade level would use the final test of the previous year to determine student placement within the tiers. The GRADE assessment would be given after winter break and resource teachers and paraeducators would help with the final spring assessment. The dates would be staggered by grade level beginning the last week of March and concluding before the third week in April before end-of-levels began.

Ultimately, teachers and administrators were pleased with these decisions and the prospects for the following year.

The second part of the RtI process addressed during this collaboration was the possibility of using the tier-two curriculum within the regular classroom to provide continuity of services delivered during the school day. Teachers felt that students needed to be able to generalize the strategies and concepts learned during tier two instruction. As one teacher commented, “If I knew how to use the tier two curriculum strategies, then I could use them with all my kids.” It was decided that providing staff development and instruction using the *Reading Rewards* (2008) program as the curriculum would be a good use of faculty meeting time twice a month. It was suggested that the resource teachers who had experience with these methods would be the instructors for these opportunities.

The majority of the teachers also wanted to build-in a coaching piece to this project. The ESL coordinator noted, “An important part of using sheltered instruction strategies in the classroom is that teachers should be allowed to observe each other in the classroom setting as they are putting into practice the Sheltered Instruction and Observation Protocol (SIOP) techniques they learn in class.” The principal suggested that they designate some trust funds to hire substitutes to fill-in for teachers while they do observations in classrooms where the teacher was using the *Reading Rewards* (2008) curriculum and SIOP model strategies. Then, after-school RtI collaboration time could be used, at times, for teachers to discuss what they observed. Expert teachers, which consists mostly of the resource department and those who have their ESL endorsement, could then

do teacher observations with the teachers learning the strategies, and give input on these observations during the same collaboration meetings.

This proposed process would also move the school closer to mirroring Utah's Academic/Behavior/Coaching intervention model. Teachers will work with administrators at all grade levels to implement this staff development initiative beginning in the late fall of 2008. The group also decided that they might want to look at following the same model of staff development with the tier three curriculum during the 2009-10 school year, depending on the results of this initial effort.

This staff development piece, along with the realignment of testing dates and the change in the assessment tools, were the two most significant changes to current practice and would have the most implications to what the school had initially instituted during the first year of RtI implementation. Data collection and further school-wide conversations and collaboration will help to determine the outcomes of the proposed changes. Significant to this conversation is recognizing that the school, as a whole, is meeting to discuss continued improvement. Teachers and administrators feel comfortable enough with the process to voice concerns that can ultimately lead to further program improvement.

### *Tier One*

Of the three tiers, tier one seems to be the most neglected in regards to discussions about specific procedures to ensure implementation integrity, and it receives less teaming time during teacher and whole-staff collaboration meetings. During consensus-building meetings, discussions about various facets of implementation and focus groups and

teacher interviews, much of the conversation centered on tiers two and three and setting up processes for student placement within the tiers. Decisions were made as to the amount of students to put in each group and the curriculum that would be used. As mentioned previously, the assessment process and how it would be managed was a topic that was addressed and revisited often. Tier one, through observation and the staff's own admission, took a lesser role. Examination of the phenomenon brings the realization that there is a school-wide expectation that every child in every classroom is, or should be, receiving effective instruction that is delivered by a highly qualified and effective teacher. Displayed attitudes of most teachers showed an assumption that most student's academic and social needs were being met through differentiation of the curriculum and artful classroom management.

During one of the final staff meetings of the 2007/2008 school year, the assistant principal broached this issue of seeming neglect to tier one and one teacher responded with the following.

I feel the lack of discussion surrounding this tier was probably a result of naturally prioritizing those issues surrounding RtI that needed the most attention. The teaching of all students within a regular education classroom is what we do every day. There's already a procedure in place for tier one, and there shouldn't be a question about whether a child should be placed in the general education classroom, except in the case of students with significant disabilities.

It was concluded in this meeting that directing initial efforts to closing the gaps in services through attention to tiers two and three, instead of focusing on tier one classroom instruction, was a good first move, schoolwide. They knew that it was going to take 3-5 years, as research shows, to implement RtI fully at CMS. They concluded that they had accomplished much in their effort to develop an RtI plan and begin to work that plan.

Several other teachers agreed with this analysis and suggested that their plan for next year should include the development of processes to collaborate and team to problem solve classroom instruction issues. The following were identified as effective tier one supported practices and programs currently functioning at CMS.

1. The newly implemented Iron County teacher evaluation process based on the Utah Professional Teacher Standards and Continuum of Teacher Development.
2. 2007/2008 staff development focus on the differentiation of instruction to be continued during the 2008/2009 school year.
3. Teacher support of student placement within tiers two and three.

Both administration and teaching staff felt that the new teacher evaluation tool could serve as the basis for individual teacher improvement. “We don’t need to reinvent the wheel for this to happen” a math teacher noted. The group decided that, the Iron County Supervisory Teacher Evaluation Process (ISTEP) is currently structured so that teachers, depending on years of service, are observed and evaluated either once or twice a year. In consultation with their administrator, they meet to discuss the results of the evaluation after it has been completed, and at the end of the school year they meet again in an exit interview to determine and set a specific goal that the teacher would like to attend to in the coming year, based on an observed skill or standard that could use improvement.

Secondly, the staff was pleased with the direction their staff development had taken during the 2007-08 school year and the focus on differentiated instruction. They concluded that they should continue to develop the skills necessary to use these strategies more effectively in their classrooms. Several teachers who had more experience and

training in differentiation were identified and will work with the assistant principal to develop a staff development plan for the coming year. There was also a discussion on adding a coaching element to the process. Teachers felt that if they could observe these “master” teachers as they taught and have them observe them as they tried the new strategies with their students they could learn from each other. Staff members agreed this would be the next logical step in promoting improvement in instruction at the classroom and individual teacher level. The school principal noted that he “[would] work with budgets and schedules to facilitate this process.”

Next, there was a brief discussion on what was and was not working when determining placement for tier two and three students. As mentioned previously, the majority of the staff, although hesitant and apprehensive at first, had noticed a marked difference in student performance and behavior after participating in these interventions. That improvement outweighed the inconvenience of moving students in and out of elective classes. One gap in services that was identified, at this time, was that of the tier two structure. Most teachers expressed an interest in finding ten more minutes within the school day that could be added to the current 30-minute schedule designated for tier two interventions. One teacher asked, “Why can’t we cut time off the seven minute passing periods to add another ten minutes?” Administrators concluded that they would work during the summer to see if they could find more time during the day and bring back options to the staff in the opening meetings for 2008-09.

As this meeting concluded, both administrators and teachers felt it would be important to implement a process for problem-solving tier one issues as they moved



toward a stronger more comprehensive RtI program at CMS. They discussed how the problem-solving model was working with their SST efforts when individual students were discussed during team meetings and decisions were made for tier placement and interventions. When it came to what was happening in the classroom to meet the needs of all students, teachers were not collaborating and making decisions based on data about improvement in instruction. One teacher noted:

We are all teaching the Utah Core Curriculum and have mapped that curriculum so that, for instance, all Language Arts teachers are teaching sentence structure and the six traits writing skills at the same time. If we were to use a common assessment to evaluate student achievement in these areas and compare student performance, we would be able to identify each teacher's strengths and possible areas of concern.

The group felt they could then share what they had been doing in their classrooms that would be considered indicators of effective teaching. Teachers whose students were perhaps struggling, overall, with certain concepts, could then learn from teachers, as proven by the data, had mastered effective teaching strategies in these areas.

Without exception, this idea seemed to make sense to teachers and administrators in the room. The logistics of such a proposal would need to be worked out, and the following questions were discussed.

1. When would this collaboration take place within the school day?
2. How often would they want or need to meet? What other types of data would be beneficial to look at besides the end-of-level tests?
3. Would they need to develop an agenda that would be used by every grade level or subject specific team?

4. Would it be beneficial, in an effort to organize the discussion results, to also include with the agenda, a form for reporting recommended action and follow-up procedures?

Research in the area of reading supports this idea of problem solving for improved effective instruction. One of the key factors in improving student achievement is the "...integration of curriculum, instruction, and assessment through the continual monitoring and adjustments in instructional practice" (Stecker, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005, p. 795). This monitoring and adjustment can come as teachers collaborate, share and learn from each other. In the interviews conducted with both the principal and assistant principal, they expressed excitement about this idea. The fact that the teachers came up with the concept for this process and wanted to add it to their current RtI efforts, was validation that it was not just an administrative effort, but that the teachers had taken ownership of the RtI system.

### Implications

The following section provides a discussion of the implications for practice based on the collected data of the current study. This will include implications and recommendations for RtI implementation at the secondary level, in general, and for a more global systems change for school improvement using RtI at the district level.

#### *Secondary RtI Implementation Recommendations and Implications*

Based on the collected data during observations, interviews and recorded field

notes the question of whether or not response to intervention can be used as a systems-wide approach to school improvement has been answered for CMS. As reported earlier in this chapter and Chapter IV, a significant number of students were first identified as needing interventions and their participation in these interventions helped to bring identified students in line with their peers academically and behaviorally. Beyond the initial data provided through diagnostic and universal assessments, is the anecdotal data recorded through observation and recognized by teachers and administrators. The recognition by CMS staff that more students were succeeding because of the school-wide efforts, has allowed them to seek further improvement and investigate future possibilities for greater systems change: all in an effort to ensure continued school improvement. The recorded journey and the documents supporting the school-wide effort can be used as evidence of success and as a template or pattern for another school to embark on the same RtI journey.

The basic premises behind RtI can be found at the core of CMS's model. They decided on the negotiables and the nonnegotiables at the beginning of the journey. For this staff, the nonnegotiables were those parts of system improvement that would be essential, in their eyes, to systematic change that would benefit students and demonstrate improved academic and social outcomes. The nonnegotiables were identified by CMS staff and backed by the research included in this case study, and each will have implications for others who decide to implement RtI systematically.

As noted previously, consensus building was tantamount to the school's RtI implementation success. To begin systems change, whatever that change may be, an

organization must have its key stakeholders “on board” with the process and the required changes. In this way, there is ownership of the process and required systems change. For a school administrator, this becomes an artful endeavor, in that their instructional leadership abilities will be key in gaining this consensus and bringing a staff together to accomplish the perceived vision for improvement. Once this consensus is achieved, the standards for building the three-tier structure must be identified. A careful examination of the benchmark data was critical in determining student placement within this three-tier structure at CMS, and the accepted percentages for each tier that govern best practice were honored.

In previous chapters, the development of the school’s SST and then establishing their purpose as a problem-solving team was critical to the RtI process. Recognition of key individuals who could give valid and informed guidance based on their expertise and knowledge of individual students, was critical to student-centered decision making. This team and their efforts gave credence to student placement within the tiers based on need. No longer were team decisions based on anecdotal accounts and frustration. Data became central to decisions made in each referred student’s behalf.

This data were gathered for all 877 students attending CMS. Again, as a part of the consensus about not only the RtI process, but also what the school could do within this process to help every student, became essential. The staff knew that they wanted to meet the needs of the struggling students. They also recognized that there were students who were advanced and needed enrichment. If they only assessed those that struggled, how were they going to have data for those who continued to excel? Also, they wanted to

have current data for every student in an effort to identify when and if students, who had previously met the benchmarks, were falling behind. They recognized that variables, including family and social inconsistencies and issues might affect student progress within the curriculum.

Another nonnegotiable for this staff was recognizing the importance of staff development and the promotion of effective teaching to improve instruction for the tier 1 setting. This became essential as the school decided what areas of RtI research needed to be attended to during continued implementation efforts. They concluded that if instruction was not effective, then students should not be the ones held accountable for deficits. Teachers needed to be held to high standards in their teaching efforts. The Utah state standards for teacher evaluation were seen as an appropriate measurement of teacher performance and accountability to help insure student success. Therefore, these standards became central to determining teacher effectiveness and were used by school administrators during annual teacher observations and evaluations. The use of differentiation strategies is promoted within these standards and was determined to be a good place to start in providing professional development opportunities for the CMS staff throughout the first year of implementation and into the second year.

Finally, the last of these nonnegotiables became the teacher reported evidence of increased student achievement and celebrations held to recognize those achievements. Unless the Cedar Middle staff could individually and collectively see the fruits of their labors, the added time for assessing all students and the increased efforts for organized staff development would have become arduous and without merit. By identifying and

sharing student success stories, the process became personal to these teachers and the challenge was then to raise student expectations based on growth, not just percentages reported through testing.

Along with determining the nonnegotiables, the staff knew from their experiences during the first year of RtI infrastructure building and implementation, that there were also those processes that could be considered negotiable or unfixed. For the most part, these negotiables were those that could be determined by school and community climate, culture and student needs. First, based on the collected data for the school's changing student population from year to year, the criteria for placement within tiers two and three may need to be reconsidered. The curriculum used within these tiers may need to be reworked based on more current research, and teachers who deliver this curriculum may need to change to capitalize on teacher expertise within the CMS staff.

The time and place where this tiered curriculum is delivered will necessarily change depending on student and subject scheduling. As the staff examines current practice, they may find that there are better and more functional options for the school logistically. For example, the administration and staff may discover that some tier two interventions could possibly be delivered within the general education classroom so that student pullout can be avoided. The school may also find that there are possible times that students could participate in tier three instruction that would not necessarily take them out of their elective courses as was done during initial RtI implementation.

As mentioned in previous chapters, the time it took to assess all 877 students at

CMS three times a year was concerning at both the onset and conclusion of the first year of RtI at CMS. As the school considers their options and researches the possibilities for group administered testing, they may discover more efficient means for obtaining essential student data. This will help to decrease the time that teachers spend assessing individual students and increase their time for teaching. Whereas the focus for increased staff development in an effort to strengthen tier one instruction was identified as a nonnegotiable, it will be essential for teachers to have the time needed during class to deliver and facilitate a truly differentiated curriculum.

As teachers continue to see the benefits of using data to drive their decisions about what they teach and how they teach it, they will need time to collaborate about student data and how best to adjust their curriculum and teaching strategies to meet the needs of their students. Again, the lack of time and difficulty in scheduling was considered a roadblock to RtI implementation. Administrators will need to take a look at the time and scheduling of a typical school day to accommodate this push for collaboration. This component, in some ways, is non-negotiable, but the means by which the school solves the issues of time will need to be flexible and continue to be a topic of discussion and focus for change.

Finally, included in the appendix of this study, are tools developed and used by the staff at CMS to facilitate their RtI efforts. Many of these documents went through several revisions before they were found to be effective. They may be helpful to others looking to develop tools that will help in their own RtI program development.

*Recommendations and Implications for  
District RtI Systems Implementation*

An unanticipated outcropping of the CMS RtI systems change effort was the effect their processes and collected data would have on the Iron County School District as a whole. As word got out about what they were doing, other schools and individuals at the district level became curious and wanted to know more. The district's Superintendent began to attend school meetings where data was discussed and student placement decisions were made. Other district officials began attending RtI workshops and institutes held in Utah. The perceived positive implications for district systems change using the RtI theories, model and research prompted the district to organize a District Leadership Team during the 2008/2009 school year. Their purpose was to put together the Iron County School District Response to Intervention Blueprint that would serve as a model for every school, pre-K through adult (see Appendix S).

This Blueprint was introduced to all school administrators and program coordinators at the conclusion of the 2008/2009 school year and consensus was built for implementation of RtI at each of their schools. A plan for district staff development support has been constructed and will be introduced by administrators to their staffs in opening meetings for the 2009-10 school year. A power point presentation developed by several district teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels will be used as the basis for this introduction. Administrators in the Iron District have recognized that they are already experiencing significant progress with students, especially at the elementary level, where the three-tier model of service delivery for literacy has been taking place for the last five years. Each school has been asked to take a look at current practice and bring



all student services under the RtI umbrella. All principal trainings for the next two years and possibly beyond, will center on RtI consensus and infrastructure-building, implementation of action plans, and processes for continuous improvement and refining.

It is recommended that these efforts continue to be supported at the district level. School staff will need to access funding and expertise that regular school budgets and personnel will have difficulty supporting. The district leadership team will need to keep functioning as a team. The plan has been developed, and it will need to be revisited and revised based on the reality of practice. They will also need to provide the support necessary for staff development and inclusion of existing program efforts, such as ESL and GATE. They can then advise on effective practice and needed improvement in program structure. These individuals will be integral in determining best practice for school problem solving teams and helping to evaluate student services.

### Critical Reflections on RtI

When any organization decides to embark on systems change, the process will bring to light both strengths and weaknesses in that system. Response to Intervention, as discussed throughout this study, can serve as an umbrella for systematic improvement. To this means it can be seen as a tool to strengthen school wide practices and to bring together a staff with a single purpose in mind. CMS recognized that this idea was at the core of their expressed vision for serving all students. As stated in their student handbook, the staff at CMS are highly devoted to the individual success of students and are prepared to dedicate their time and energy in guiding them through this stage of their

academic careers. RtI provides a structure for meeting these individual needs. This is what drew them to its concepts. In implementing response to intervention with integrity, the staff also quickly became aware of the realities of that implementation which challenged other beliefs in what education should be—two in particular.

The first of these recognized beliefs is to provide a rich educational experience that takes into account the whole child who has talents and strengths beyond academics. By centering the focus of this systems change on academics, specifically literacy and eventually math, there was a feeling among the staff that not enough attention would be given to other aspects of a student's education; namely the arts and technology. When the decision was made to pull tier three students out of their elective classes to give them more intense instruction in reading, there was a recognized danger that these students would become discouraged with school and that this discouragement would lead to apathy. The parent interviews conducted as a part of this study revealed that they shared this fear. Knowing that tier three would only be considered for three to five percent of the total student population (approximately 26 to 43 students), this number seemed to be manageable in the eyes of the CMS staff. The data presented in chapter four shows that 31 students began the school year in tier three interventions, and by the end of the year only 24 were still participating in this tier—a decrease of approximately 22%. The school team felt that as long as they kept the lines of communication open between teachers, parents, counselors and administrators, they would be able to monitor student responses to the tier three instruction both from an academic and social point of view. The evidence of this monitoring is only seen in the responses to interview questions by study

participants, and the long-term effects of this pull-out process and revocation of elective class attendance should be the impetus for further research.

Secondly, the issue of assessing, and the time it takes to complete these assessments for 877 students three times a year was the most significant barrier to CMS's RtI infrastructure building and implementation. Originally, it had been decided by the school's leadership team that they would use the comprehension portion of the QRI to benchmark where every student was in regards to their ability to comprehend curriculum content and assigned text. The only practical means for accomplishing this task was to have all of the language arts, social studies, science and math teachers administer this assessment. The resource teachers, along with the trained paraeducators assisted in this process. Even with the provided assistance, it took a full 2 weeks to finish the assessments. This was 2 weeks that teachers were not meeting with all of their students and delivering curriculum. It was clear from the discussion at the meetings discussed in chapter four and the interviews reported in Chapters III and IV that this was a concern for every teacher involved. Some of them were more expressive than others as to the extent of the discomfort they felt, but each of them was affected.

Students were engaged in curriculum-based projects facilitated by paraeducators or substitute teachers while their peers were being assessed, but the expedited timeline to accomplish three rounds of testing, did not allow for as much thought and preparation as teachers would have liked. This made them uncomfortable with the hurried process. As reported in Chapter V, the school's leadership team has taken this input and will be looking for less time-consuming ways to assess students.

### Recommendations for Research

The current case study with CMS revealed some possibilities for continued research based on the premises of response to intervention implementation. It would be beneficial for practitioners to apply the concepts and services of RtI beyond the realm of literacy and into other subjects at both the elementary and secondary levels. The current research reveals that this is being done in some districts that have been employing the concepts of RtI for a longer period. The same core principles of the method would be applicable, with adjustments made as to how subjects like math, or the sciences would be assessed. True to the RtI research, students would need to have progress monitored frequently to insure growth measurement remained key to the program's focus. The basic tiered structure would remain constant, in that schools need to evaluate core classroom instruction to identify whether or not it is effective in any subject or multiple subjects studied. Tier two and three interventions would need to attend to the elements of time and intensity, and the problem-solving method for collaboration and teaming will remain constant.

Further, behavior management program questions could be addressed in an effort to find whether or not and to what extent behavior and academics are linked when it comes to student success in school. Data could be collected that would follow specific struggling students through a portion of their academic career to find if there is a correlation between the two, and if so, what are the variables involved. Many state and local education agencies have suggested that there is a connection. It would be helpful for educators to see actual collected data supporting this theory. In addition, continued

research in the area of school improvement could explore whether or not RtI concepts are helpful in providing a system of services for other types of learners such as those who excel and are identified as gifted.

Additionally, more in-depth and comprehensive data will need to be collected to measure RtI program effectiveness. Whereas this study sought to record the journey associated with implementation, it would be beneficial to look at specific data associated with a possible quantitative study examining program effectiveness based on student outcomes. Finally, a longitudinal study done to explore the lasting effects of RtI on both school and individual student improvement for all learners would be beneficial to this body of work. If RtI is used in a district to achieve systems change, are the effects lasting and program improvement sustainable? In a climate of accountability, these and other questions about what works in schools are critical ones to answer.

### Summary

Recognizing that procedures and processes involved in the implementation of RtI at the secondary level will be dynamic and evolutionary is arguably the most significant of the implications noted in this study. Mellard and Johnson (2008) noted the following:

As research continues to inform the procedural aspects of RtI implementation, commensurate energy should be directed to understanding the contextual variables that play a significant role in shaping and influencing how RtI is ultimately implemented. (p. 143)

As mentioned previously, there is no specific template, outline or roadmap for secondary schools to follow as they embark on the RtI journey—only the theories and research supporting its implementation. The majority of this research has been conducted at the

elementary level, and for the most part has centered on reading and literacy. Educational entities that choose to embrace RtI's premises, theories and supporting research as the chosen structure for systems change in all areas of study will, at times, be charting new courses and adding their own experiences to the recorded journey of others, like CMS.

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Thirteen Guiding Questions for RtI Implementation

HEARTLAND AEA – 13 GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR RTI  
IMPLEMENTATION

2007

CORE

1. For which students is the core program sufficient and not sufficient?
2. Is our core program sufficient?
3. How will we monitor the sufficiency of our core program over time?

SUPPLEMENTAL

4. Why isn't core sufficient for these students?
5. What specific supplemental instruction is needed?
6. How/will we deliver that specific supplemental instruction?
7. How will we know if it is working?
8. How will we know if students need to move to a different level of instruction?

INTENSIVE

9. Why isn't core and supplemental instruction sufficient for meeting these students' instructional needs?
10. What specific intensive instruction is needed?
11. How will we deliver that specific intensive instruction?
12. How will we know if it is working?
13. How will we know if students need to move to a different level of instruction?

## Heartland AEA 13 RtI GUIDING QUESTIONS WITH SUBSTEPS

## Core

- **Question 1: For which students is the core program sufficient and not sufficient?**
  - Step 1: Identify screening tool(s)
  - Step 2: Identify proficiency cut-offs (all levels)
  - Step 3: Collect universal screening data
  - Step 4: Enter, organize, summarize data
- **Question 2: Is our core program sufficient?**
  - Step 1: What percentage of proficiency is acceptable?
  - Step 2: What percentage of our students are Advanced/Proficient/Not Proficient?
  - Step 3: Make Comparison
  - Step 4: Identify what work needs to be done on the core curriculum and instruction program
- **Question 3: How will we monitor the sufficiency of our core program over time?**
  - Universal Screening Data (How often? How summarized? How used?)
  - Accountability Assessments (How often? How summarized? How used?)
  - Classroom Assessments (How often? How summarized? How used?)

## Supplemental

- **Question 4: Why isn't core sufficient for these students?**
  - Step 1: List students who are less than proficient and their scores
  - Step 2: Identify list of additional assessments aligned with essential components in the content area
  - Step 3: Identify CAP for additional assessments
  - Step 4: Logistics for administering additional assessments
  - Step 5: Organize/Summarize/Display Results
- **Question 5: What specific supplemental instruction is needed?**
  - Step 1: Determine instructional need of students.

- Step 2: Form initial supplemental instructional groups based upon instructional needs/skill levels of students
- Step 3: Best-case scenario, what do we need to provide for each instructional group?
  - Curriculum
  - Instruction
  - Research
  - Amount of Time
- Step 4: Identify specific resources currently available to match to specific group needs
- Step 5: Identify what additional resources are needed to meet students' needs
- **Question 6: How will we deliver that specific supplemental instruction?**
  - Step 1: Complete Action Plan
  - Step 2: Considerations:
    - Professional Development
    - Materials
    - Where/When instruction will occur
    - Who will deliver instruction?
    - Logistics and Scheduling
    - Etc.
- **Question 7: How will we know if it is working?**
  - Step 1: Consider possible systematic methods for collecting ongoing data
  - Step 2: Pick the most appropriate method
  - Step 3: Put the logistics in place, I.e. frequency, materials, who, how will data be analyzed, etc.
  - Step 4: Look at integrity of implementation
- **Question 8: How will we know if students need to move to a different level of instruction?**
  - Step 1: Determine which students need to move to Core only
  - Step 2: Determine which students need to move to Intensive Instruction



## Intensive

- **Question 9: Why isn't core and supplemental instruction sufficient for meeting these students' instructional needs?**
  - Step 1: Identify students in need of intensive instruction and their scores
  - Step 2: Identify specific assessments to be used with individual students (could be CBM)
  - Step 3: Identify CAP assessments
  - Step 4: Logistics for individual diagnostic assessment
  - Step 5: Organize/Summarize/Display Results
- **Question 10: What specific intensive instruction is needed?**
  - Step 1: Determine instructional needs of individuals
  - Step 2: Form individual or small instructional groups based upon instructional needs/skill levels
  - Step 3: Best-case scenario, what do we need to provide for each individual or small instructional group.
    - Curriculum
    - Instruction
    - Research
    - Amount of Time
  - Step 4: Identify specific resources currently available to match to specific group needs
  - Step 5: Find gaps
  - Step 6: Identify what additional resources are needed to meet students' needs
- **Question 11: How will we deliver that specific intensive instruction?**
  - Step 1: Complete individual or small group intervention plans
  - Step 2: Considerations:
    - Ongoing support team involvement
    - Professional Development
    - Materials
    - When/Where instruction will occur
    - Who will deliver instruction?
    - Logistics and scheduling
    - Etc.

- **Question 12: How will we know if it is working?**
  - Step 1: Consider possible systematic methods for collecting ongoing data
  - Step 2: Pick the most appropriate method
  - Step 3: Put the logistics in place, I.e. frequency, materials, who, how will data be analyzed, etc.
  - Step 4: Look at integrity of implementation
- **Question 13: How will we know if students need to move to a different level of instruction?**
  - Step 1: Determine which students need to move to Core, or Core plus Supplemental
  - Step 2: Determine which students need to continue in Intensive programming
  - Step 3: Determine which students may be in need of additional resources

*\*Used by permission from Heartland AEA, Iowa 2009*

## Appendix B

### CMS Vision and Action Plan

*Our quest for knowledge will be achieved by providing a quality education that empowers individuals to become caring, competent, responsible citizens who value learning as a lifelong process”.*

-Cedar Middle School, Mission statement 2007-08

*Action plan:*

We intend to fulfill the mission of our school by utilizing Professional Learning Communities that are dedicated to doing what is best for children. The staff understands the specific needs of today’s young adolescent, and we intend to use this expertise to enhance student progress. Our unified faculty and staff are passionate in supporting each other with a single focus in mind, that being “success for everyone”. With the transition that has taken place, we have established a baseline that will guide our decision making in the future. The following goals will help us to accomplish this.

**Success for everyone.**

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible
We will continue to learn and incorporate <u>SAMS</u> so that we can use student data to drive decision making.	Ongoing	Data Team Administration Teachers
Individual attention will be given to students to achieve a <u>3% increase</u> in the number of students above the line on all end-of-level (CRT) tests.	Ongoing	Math, Science, and Language Arts Teachers
A <u>remediation program</u> will be created that will give students more one-on-one assistance in <u>CORE areas</u> (math, science and language arts) where they are deficient. Students will be placed in a “ <u>Study Hall</u> ” to provide this additional time.	Ongoing	Jane Twitchell, Student Success Team and Teachers
We will develop an “ <u>At Risk</u> ” list of struggling students based on specific criteria that we will <u>monitor</u> more closely for <u>remediation</u>	Ongoing	Administration, Student Success Team
An <u>advisory program</u> will be implemented to provide a true advocate for every child.	Beginning to end.	Administration Teachers Counselors
We will begin <u>implementation</u> of an <u>RTI</u> model to enhance student success in reading.	Fall 2007	Jane Twitchell 6 <sup>th</sup> Grade Teachers.

**Professionalism.**

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible
We will strive for a <u>unified</u> front in addressing student needs.	Ongoing	Staff, and PTA
We will set the tone in our school by being <u>professional</u> in our <u>dress</u> , <u>grooming</u> , and <u>actions</u> as directed by ICSD policy.	Ongoing	Staff
<u>Communication</u> with parents will be timely and professional.	Ongoing	Teachers and Administrators
<u>SEOP conferences</u> will be beneficial to the student and parent, Each child will have a true advisor as we implement our advisory program. 90% attendance is our goal.	Fall and Spring	Administration Teachers Counselors
<u>Professional Learning Communities</u> will be utilized. Emphasis will be placed on curriculum and best teaching practices across the board	Yearly Quality Teaching time will be used	Administrators Teachers Counselors.

**Curriculum and Instruction**

Action Steps	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible
<u>Curriculum alignment</u> will be addressed as we strive to focus on " <i>Power standards</i> " and exact expectations of student knowledge for each class.	Ongoing	Teachers, Department Chairs, and SIC
Specific curriculum content will be our guide as we make objectives meaningful and relevant to avoid <u>ineffective</u> use of <u>instructional time</u> .	Ongoing	Teachers
We will focus on <u>Math</u> curriculum and <u>best teaching strategies</u> to enhance student learning.	Quarterly	Jennifer Rowland
Reading will be addressed via the <u>RTI</u> implementation beginning in the 6 <sup>th</sup> grade this year	Ongoing	Teachers
<u>Special needs</u> students will be provided with services and accommodations that will allow them to be tested more effectively	Ongoing	Teachers
Implement CMS ESL plan with focus on 6 targeted areas.	Fall 2007	ESL Coordinator & Committee

## Appendix C

### Utah's Three-Tier Model of Reading Instruction


**K-12**

**STA'S**

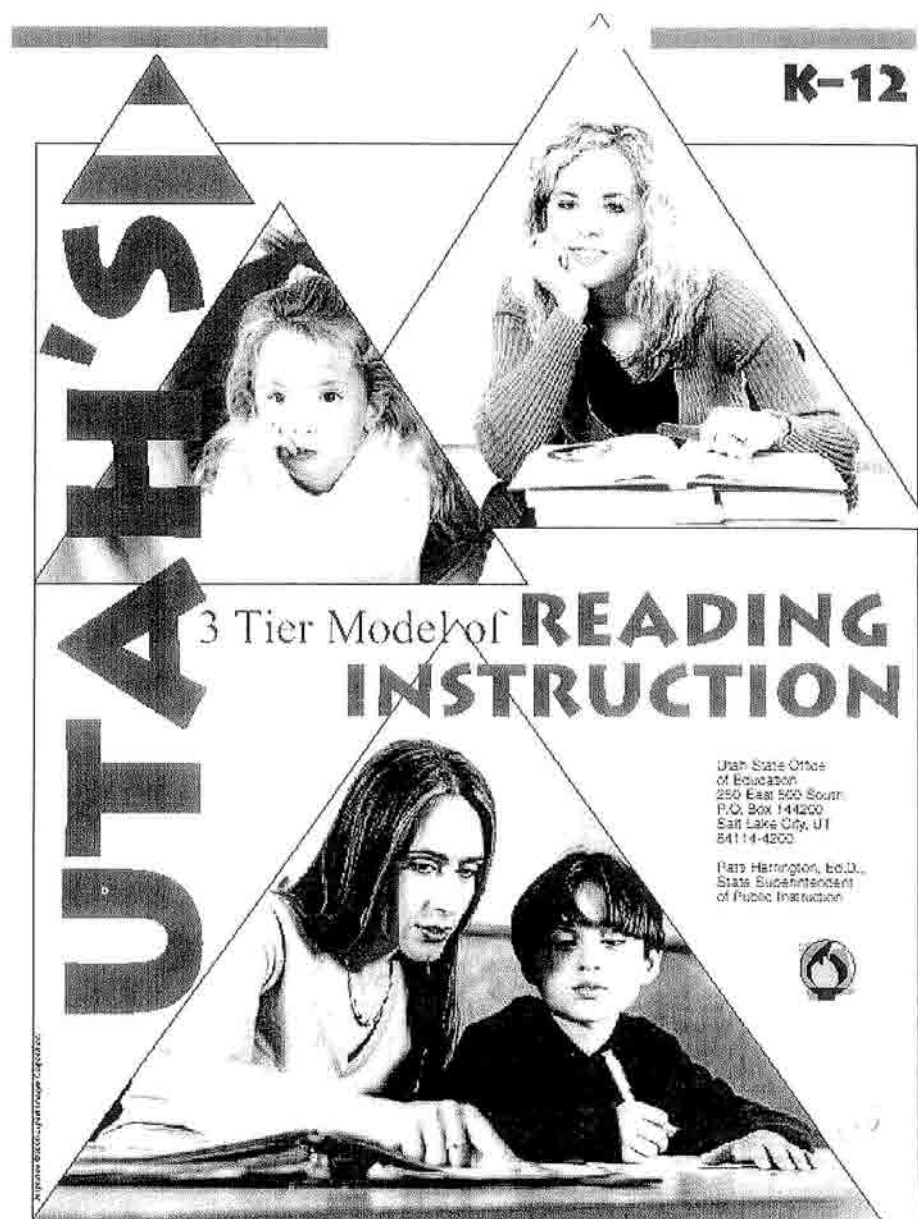
**3 Tier Model of READING INSTRUCTION**

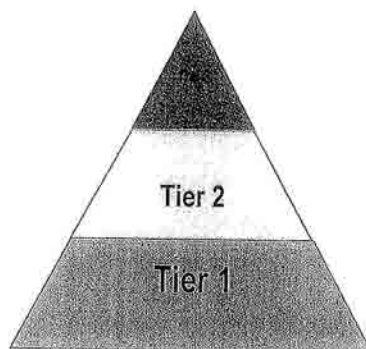
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P.O. Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, UT  
84114-4200

Rats Harrington, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction



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## **UTAH'S 3 Tier Model of READING INSTRUCTION**

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January 2007

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## Preface

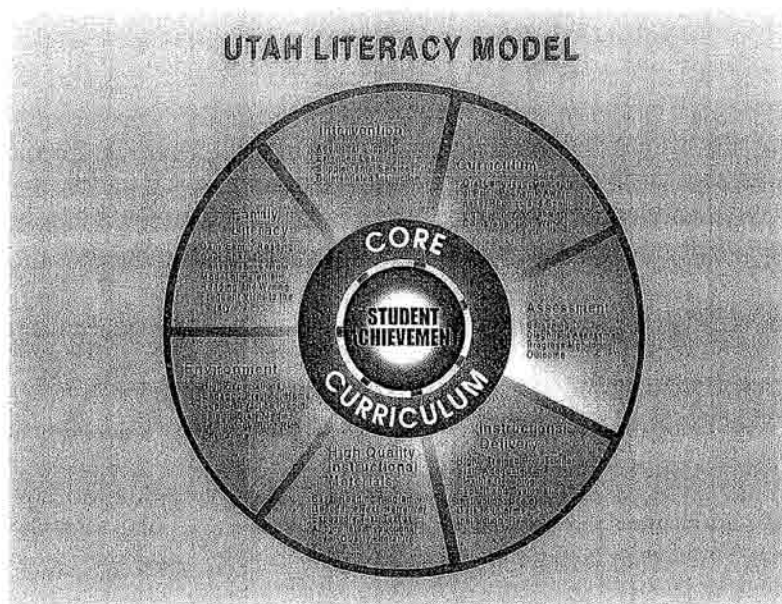
Reading is a fundamental skill that provides a foundation for lifetime success. Thus, the Utah State Office of Education is committed to improving the reading achievement of all students, K-12, through the development of a 3 Tier model. Although teaching students to read is a complex process, ***Utah's 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction*** recognizes that most students can learn to read.

Both research and Utah's model acknowledge that teaching students to read requires a knowledgeable, skilled teacher who uses a systematic and explicit approach to instruction. The model also emphasizes the importance of local school principals as literacy leaders, the use of data to guide instruction, appropriate intervention and practice, parent involvement, and other research-based practices.

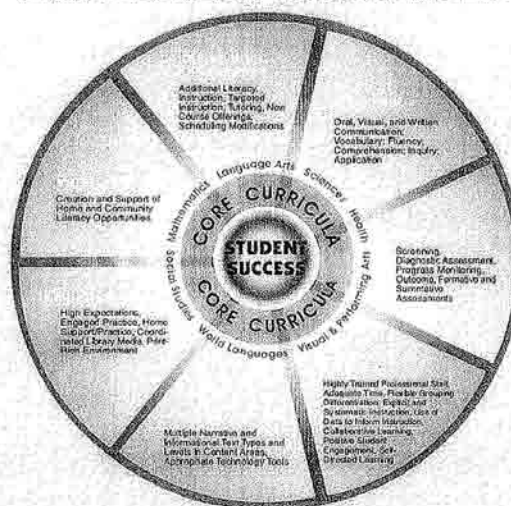
Utah's Elementary and Secondary Literacy Models are supported by ***Utah's 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction***. The elementary and secondary models provide a framework for classroom instruction, interventions, and application across all content areas creating successful reading achievement for students.

***Utah's 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction*** provides Utah educators with a process for delivering quality, research-based instruction using Utah's Core Curricula. The model provides a foundation for reducing the prevalence of struggling readers by creating a seamless K-12 instructional system aligning with federal and state legislative requirements. Utah's 3 Tier Model is also a process to provide data to teachers in determining student responsiveness to interventions.

This document was developed to guide educators K-12 in implementing a 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction. The Utah State Office of Education is dedicated to improving the reading achievement of all students through this model.



### UTAH SECONDARY LITERACY MODEL

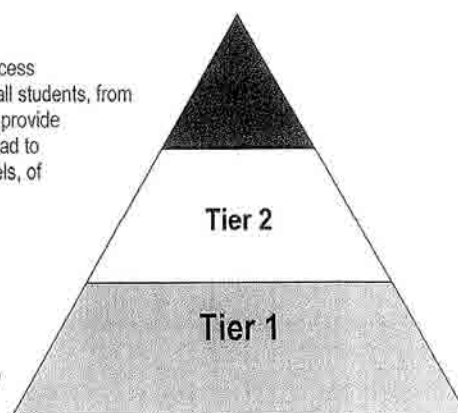


## Introduction to Utah's 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction

The Utah 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction provides a process for delivering comprehensive, quality reading instruction for all students, from Kindergarten through high school. The model is designed to provide research-based instruction and targeted interventions that lead to successful reading. The model consists of three tiers, or levels, of instruction: Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3.

### **Tier 1: Core Classroom Instruction**

Tier 1 refers to core classroom instruction for all students utilizing scientifically based reading research (SBRR) to teach critical elements outlined in the Utah Core Curriculum. Most students will demonstrate proficiency with effective Tier 1 instruction.



### **Tier 2: Supplemental Targeted Instruction**

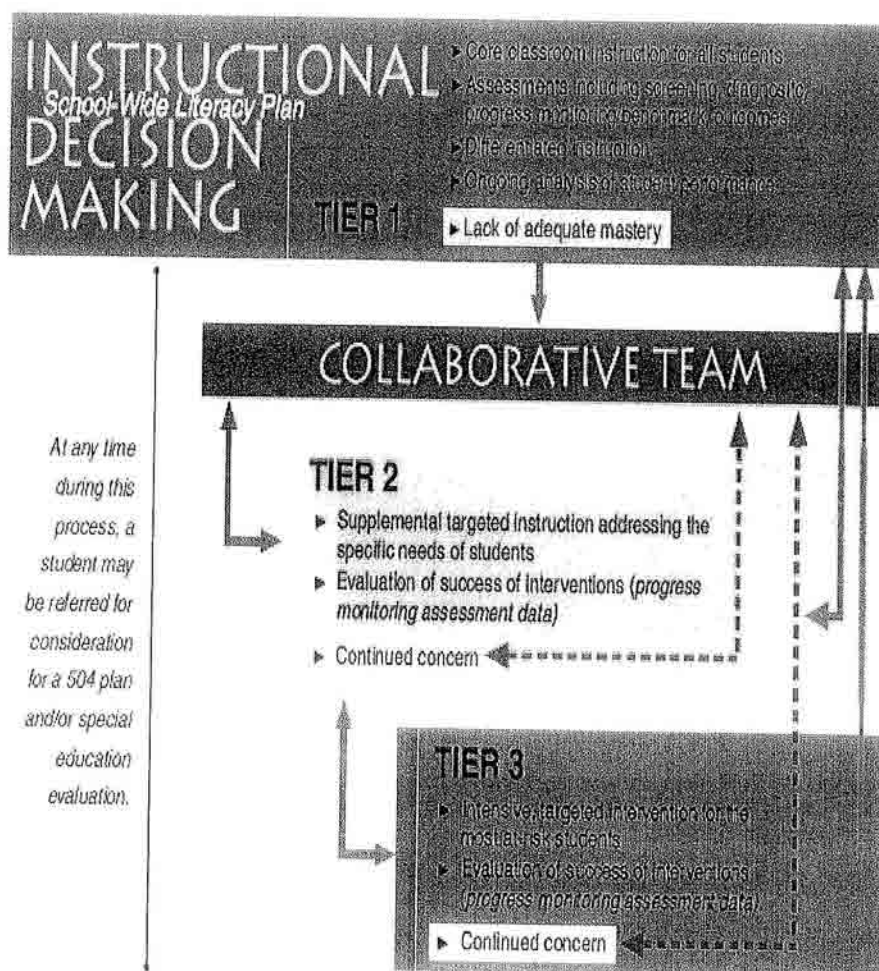
Tier 2 provides supplemental targeted instruction in addition to Tier 1, and addresses the specific needs of students who do not make adequate reading progress in Tier 1. Tier 2 interventions should be targeted, scientifically based, and aligned with core classroom instruction. Approximately 10-15 percent of students will require Tier 2 instruction. The duration of this instruction varies based on student assessment and progress monitoring data, and is it generally provided by the classroom teacher.

### **Tier 3: Intensive Targeted Intervention**

Tier 3 is designed to provide intensive, targeted intervention to the most at-risk readers, those who have not responded adequately to Tier 2 instruction. This small percentage (3-5 percent) of students usually has severe reading difficulties and requires instruction that is more explicit, more intensive, and specifically designed to meet their individual needs. This intervention is extended over a longer period of time, and its form varies based on student assessment and progress monitoring data. Tier 3 intervention replaces Tier 2 instruction, and is provided by a specialist.

### **Student Movement Through the Tiers**

Student movement through the 3 Tiers is a fluid process based on student assessment data and collaborative team decisions. At any time during this process, a student may be referred for consideration for a 504 plan and/or special education evaluation. Tutoring may be necessary in any of the tiers to provide extra practice and support to help students maintain benchmark progress.



## Assessment

Assessment is the process of collecting, reviewing, and using information to make educational decisions about student learning. The type of information collected is determined by the intended use of the results or type of decision that is needed. An effective reading program should include at least four types of assessment: screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, and outcome. Some assessments can be used for multiple purposes.

**Screening assessments** are quick and efficient measures of overall reading ability or efficient measures of *critical skills* known to be strong indicators that predict student reading performance.

**Diagnostic assessments** define a student's weaknesses and strengths with critical reading skills. Diagnostic assessments are individually administered to students at risk for reading failure and provide specific information needed to guide appropriate instruction. They typically take longer to administer than screening or benchmark assessments. Considering the time and resources needed to administer these assessments, only students identified as at risk should be given these assessments. Diagnostic assessments help teachers plan instruction by providing in-depth information regarding students' skills and instructional needs.

**Benchmark assessments** are measures of a student's current achievement with reading proficiency based on *grade-level performance standards*. These assessments should be administered at least three times a year (fall, winter, and spring). It is important to ensure these assessments are easy to administer, score, and interpret. Benchmark assessments provide information to plan instruction and inform needed interventions.

**Progress monitoring assessments** determine whether students are making adequate reading progress with critical skills and current instruction. These assessments should be administered as part of the instructional routine: weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly, depending on student need. The more intense the intervention (Tiers 2 and 3), the more frequently progress monitoring should occur. Progress monitoring ensures that all students continue to make adequate progress in targeted areas of reading. They also ensure that group or individualized instruction is provided for students at risk for failure. Assessment data should be collected, evaluated, and used on an ongoing basis to plan instruction and inform needed interventions.

**Outcome assessments** provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction and indicate student year-end reading achievement when compared to grade-level performance standards. These assessments are administered to all students at the end of a grading period and/or school year. Outcome assessments can be administered in a group or individually. Group administration may be more efficient to measure skills and concepts that all students are expected to have mastered. Outcome assessments are often used for school, district, or state reporting purposes.

**Informal assessments** provide additional information about student learning to assist educators in meeting the needs of students. They are typically not standardized or normed; thus, they do not meet the technical criteria applied to more formal measures and should not replace formal assessments.

## Effective Instructional Practices

Utah's 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction provides educators with a process for delivering effective reading instruction to all K-12 students. The three main components of effective instruction are (1) highly qualified teachers, (2) explicit and systematic lessons, and (3) differentiated instruction.

### Highly Qualified Teachers

Highly qualified teachers have a significant impact on students' reading achievement. They select and administer assessments that identify the diverse instructional needs of all students, with an understanding that the use of ongoing assessments measuring student achievement is the single most important determinant of the effectiveness of implemented practices.

Highly qualified teachers have the knowledge and skill to deliberately plan instruction and select appropriate materials that align with the Utah Core Curriculum. They make informed decisions based on research findings to increase the likelihood that their instruction will lead to improvements in student reading achievement. They have comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the following:

- The Utah Elementary and Secondary Language Arts Core Curriculum
- Scientifically based reading instruction emphasizing the five critical elements: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension
- The purpose and instructional use of screening, benchmark, diagnostic, progress monitoring and outcome assessments

Through experience and training, highly qualified teachers also possess the skills to employ instructional techniques that have the greatest impact on learning to read. They effectively:

- Provide explicit and systematic lessons.
- Determine instructional timelines and targets.
- Select and use a variety of research-based materials, including a core reading program and appropriately leveled narrative and informational texts.
- Form flexible groups to meet the needs of individual students (e.g., one-on-one, pairs, small groups, whole group).
- Administer progress monitoring assessments to instruct and regroup students according to student knowledge and skill acquisition.
- Create a literate environment in which children have access to a variety of high-quality reading and writing opportunities and materials.
- Create multiple opportunities for students to engage in sustained reading opportunities in a variety of authentic and isolated contexts (e.g. individual, partner, small group, whole group).
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to appropriately practice and apply literacy skills in a variety of contexts.
- Manage student activity and behavior.
- Utilize instructional resources effectively.
- Engage parental support.



### Explicit and Systematic Lessons

Reading failure can be attributed to the faulty assumption that students know how to complete a task without explicit lessons. More than any other factor, explicit instruction is essential to student reading achievement. Research supports the assertion that skills and strategies must be explicitly and systematically taught. They must be modeled and practiced in multiple settings with a variety of text materials. A gradual release of teacher support must follow until the student achieves the desired level of automaticity. Dr. Joe Torgesen explains that **explicit instruction** is instruction that does not leave anything to chance, and it does not make assumptions about skills and knowledge that children acquire on their own. Outstanding and effective teachers understand the following sequential components of **explicit instruction**:

- **Direct Explanation**  
Teacher names and defines the skill or strategy to be learned. This definition should include explaining why the skill or strategy is important and when it is used in reading.
- **Teacher Modeling**  
Teacher overtly demonstrates a skill or strategy that a student will learn. Through modeling, instruction becomes less elusive and more concrete for students. Explicit instruction provides a greater likelihood that students will demonstrate mastery.
- **Guided Practice**  
Teacher provides students with support and guidance as they practice the skill or strategy independently or in small groups. Prompts, specific corrective feedback, and praise related to the new skill or strategy are provided. Teacher support gradually fades as the student takes responsibility for using the skill or strategy independently.
- **Independent Practice**  
Students are provided with multiple opportunities to apply the newly acquired skill or strategy on their own. Through independent practice, students continue to review and practice the skills and strategies learned.
- **Progress Monitoring**  
Teacher monitors and evaluates student mastery of the new skill or strategy. Future instruction is designed to target skills and strategies that require additional review and practice.

### Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction recognizes that learning is a cyclical process. Progress monitoring may indicate that the student has not mastered the new skill or strategy. If this occurs, skills and strategies are re-taught within the appropriate phase of explicit instruction.

- Clarify an explanation with additional examples or details.
- Model with more intensity and clarity during a small group or one-on-one setting.
- Provide additional guided practice opportunities with further teacher support.
- Increase teacher monitoring and feedback during independent practice.

### Differentiated Instruction

As educators, we cannot assume we have thirty clones in each of our classrooms. Thus, differentiated instruction should be provided for all students as part of Tier 1 instruction. The classroom teacher should provide flexible instructional grouping of students based on their ongoing identified needs to produce a positive trajectory for reading achievement.

All students should receive the same undiluted content. The classroom teacher should adjust the degree of complexity of the content to meet the needs of students performing well beyond expectations, on level, or far below expected level of achievement.

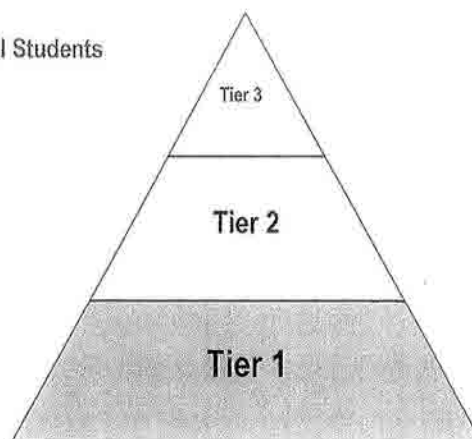
Classroom teachers should be crystal clear about what they are trying to teach and why. Research has shown that teachers are often too random in their delivery of instruction, unclear as to what they are teaching, and unable to succinctly define a reason for instruction. Teachers tend to provide multiple activities that fail to lead students to achieve the intended instructional objective.

Teachers should have clear objectives for instruction, deliver targeted instruction utilizing the Utah Core Curricula, provide focused activities, and adjust the instructional complexity through differentiation. Teachers must have classroom procedures firmly in place to facilitate differentiation. Otherwise, students will be unable to work independently while the teacher works with differentiated groups of students. Teachers should provide ongoing monitoring of student success to determine changing differentiated instructional needs.

In Tier 2 and Tier 3, differentiation is provided through addressing specific, targeted needs. This instruction occurs in smaller groups with increased intensity. Progress monitoring occurs more frequently and provides the information needed to make instructional decisions.

## 7-12 Tier 1 Core Classroom Instruction for All Students

Tier 1 refers to reading instruction for ALL students within ALL core content area classrooms. Instruction is provided through a combination of informational and narrative texts, including primary source documents. Content area instruction supports specific Utah Core Curricula by emphasizing content area vocabulary and research-validated literacy practices. Assessment data is used to monitor and inform instruction. School-wide reading screening assessments are administered to ALL Tier 1 students to identify those experiencing reading difficulties. Classroom content area assessments are administered periodically to determine whether students are making progress or need extra support. These assessments provide data for planning differentiated and scaffolded instruction delivered in flexible grouping, i.e. whole group, small group, partner and individual study. Outcome assessments are administered to ALL Tier 1 students to determine student growth/gain over time.

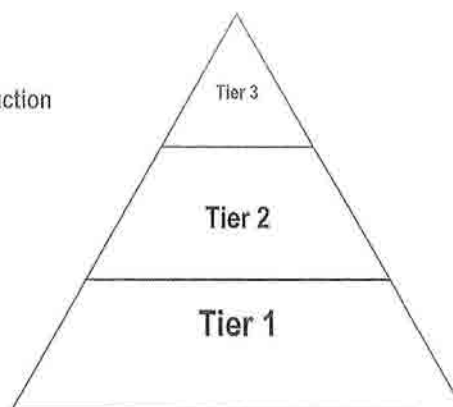


### Tier 1 Essential Elements of Instruction

Component	Instruction
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utah Secondary Core Curriculum</li> </ul>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructional materials supporting specific core content areas</li> <li>Use of SBRR materials and practices emphasizing vocabulary, comprehension, and writing</li> <li>Use of content materials that support literacy</li> <li>Differentiated curriculum materials</li> </ul>
Instructional Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large group instruction of skills</li> <li>Differentiated, small group instruction for skill application, re-teaching, and/or additional practice as determined by content assessments</li> </ul>
Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly qualified classroom teacher trained to implement literacy practices</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Screening, classroom, and outcome-based assessments</li> <li>Parents informed of student progress on a regular basis</li> </ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instruction provided in core content class periods</li> <li>Application of skills and strategies across all content areas</li> </ul>
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All content areas</li> </ul>
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouragement of parent-school partnerships</li> <li>Home practice and support</li> <li>Use of trained paraprofessionals to provide practice opportunities under the direction of the classroom teacher</li> <li>Professional development for school personnel</li> </ul>

### 7-12 Tier 2 Supplemental Targeted Instruction

Tier 2 refers to targeted SBRR supplemental instruction. This instruction is aimed at remediating the specific deficits of students who fail to meet Tier 1 benchmarks in one or more critical areas of reading: word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Tier 2 instruction is systematic, explicit, and aligned with Tier 1 instruction. Instructional interventions are differentiated based on the needs of individual students as determined by assessment data.

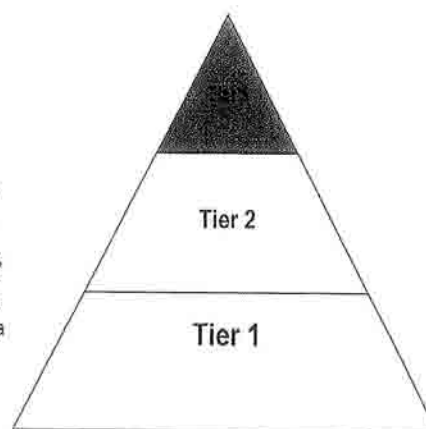


### Tier 2 Essential Elements of Instructional Intervention

Component	Instruction
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasis on SBRR instruction in the areas of word study, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as the need is diagnosed</li> </ul>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of SBRR core materials and practices that support core curricula and target one or more of the four critical elements of reading, as well as oral language and writing</li> <li>Use of intervention and content materials that support Tier 1 instruction</li> <li>Differentiated curriculum materials</li> </ul>
Instructional Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Differentiated, scaffolded, explicit, and systematic instruction</li> <li>Flexible, small homogeneous group instruction for application of skills, re-teaching, and/or additional practice as determined by progress monitoring data</li> </ul>
Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly qualified reading teacher, reading specialist, special education teacher, speech/language pathologists, ELL teacher or other specialists as needed</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Screening and progress monitoring</li> <li>Communication with content area teachers regarding student progress</li> <li>Parents informed of student progress on a regular basis</li> </ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A minimum of one class period</li> <li>Applications of skills and strategies across all content areas</li> </ul>
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A class period to provide reading intervention</li> </ul>
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouragement of parent-school partnerships</li> <li>Provide parent training and appropriate materials for home practice and support</li> <li>Before and after-school literacy activities/programs</li> <li>Additional tutoring</li> <li>Use of trained paraprofessionals and volunteers to provide additional practice and support</li> <li>Professional development for all staff members</li> <li>Teacher collaboration</li> </ul>

### 7-12 Tier 3 Intensive Instructional Intervention

Tier 3 is for students who have not responded adequately to at least one round of Tier 2 instruction. This small percentage of students usually have severe reading difficulties and require instruction that is more explicit, more intensive, and specifically designed to meet individual needs in the areas of essential phonics/word study, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and, in extreme cases, phonemic awareness. Diagnostic and weekly progress monitoring assessments are utilized extensively with this group of students to identify problems, check progress, and provide appropriate, targeted interventions using SBRR materials. Tier 3 instruction replaces Tier 2 and is in addition to Tier 1. If progress monitoring and diagnostic assessments show that a student is not making progress he or she may be referred for further evaluation and additional services.



#### *Tier 3 Elements of Intensive Targeted Intervention*

Components	Instruction
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasis on SBRR instruction in the area/s of word study, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as the need is diagnosed</li> </ul>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SBRR intervention programs/materials that remediate specific reading difficulties</li> <li>Use of intervention and content materials that support Tier 1 instruction</li> <li>Differentiated curriculum materials</li> </ul>
Instructional Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explicit, intense, targeted instruction</li> <li>Use of multi-sensory approaches, as appropriate</li> <li>Flexible, small homogeneous group (2 to 3 students) or individual instruction for application of skills, re-teaching, and/or additional practice as determined by progress-monitoring data</li> </ul>
Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly qualified classroom teacher, reading specialist, special education teacher, speech/language pathologists, ELL teacher or other specialists as needed</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further diagnostic assessments, as needed, and weekly progress monitoring</li> <li>Communication with content area teachers regarding student progress</li> <li>Parents informed of student progress on a regular basis</li> </ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A minimum of one class period</li> <li>Applications of skills and strategies across all content areas</li> </ul>
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriate setting within the school (reading intervention classroom, resource classroom, or other specialized instructional settings)</li> </ul>
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of trained support personnel to provide additional targeted practice and instruction under the direction of the classroom teacher</li> <li>Encouragement of parent-school partnerships</li> <li>Provide parent training and appropriate materials for home practice and support</li> <li>Before and after-school reading activities/programs</li> <li>Professional development provided for all school personnel</li> </ul>

## School Collaborative Teams

In the implementation of the Utah 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction, a school that supports one or more collaborative team(s) is more likely to meet the needs of struggling readers. Teams should be established based on the learning needs of students and availability of staff members. The collaborative team approach is supported by research and has been found to be most effective when the team addresses both prevention *and* intervention of reading difficulties. Successes include the following:

- A high rate of student achievement
- Increased capacity of teachers to meet specific needs of struggling students
- Decreased number of special education referrals and placements

In establishing collaborative teams, schools need to plan, organize, develop procedural guidelines, continue to evaluate effectiveness, and make adjustments as needed. Effective teams use a problem-solving process such as follows:

- Define the problem
- Analyze why it is occurring
- Develop and implement action plan
- Monitor student progress
- Evaluate plan effectiveness
- Continue with or adjust plan

Team members should have the skills listed below:

- Group processing
- Effective classroom organization and management
- Problem-solving and collaboration
- Data collection/evaluation
- Instructional adaptations and interventions

In addition, team members should have knowledge and training in of the following:

- The Utah Core Curricula
- The five critical components of reading
- Culturally sensitive instructional issues
- SBRR instructional materials and practices
- Types of assessments
- Availability of school and community resources

## Examples of School Collaborative Teams

<i><b>Team</b></i>	<i><b>Recommended Members</b></i>	<i><b>Purpose</b></i>
<b>Grade Level Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All grade level teachers</li> <li>• Reading specialist and/or reading coach</li> <li>• ELL teacher</li> <li>• Speech/language pathologist</li> <li>• School psychologist</li> <li>• Administrators as appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure consistency of effective instructional practices within and across grade levels</li> <li>• Share responsibility for student achievement, using student data as a base for instructional decision making</li> <li>• Act as a problem-solving organization whose members assist each other in meeting the literacy needs of students</li> </ul>
<b>Content Area Department Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department head</li> <li>• Content area teachers</li> <li>• Administrators as appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure consistency of instructional practices within the content area</li> <li>• Share responsibility for student achievement, using student data as a base for instructional decision-making</li> <li>• Act as a problem-solving organization whose members assist each other in meeting the literacy needs of students</li> </ul>
<b>Literacy Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated classroom teachers</li> <li>• Reading specialist and/or reading coach</li> <li>• Special educator, speech-language specialist, as appropriate</li> <li>• Administrators as appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide assistance to teachers whose students are not reaching Tier 1 benchmarks by developing an instructional plan based on student's record of assessment, performance data, and teacher input</li> <li>• Provide assistance to teachers whose students are not reaching Tier 2 targets by developing an instructional plan based on student's record of assessment, performance data, and teacher input</li> <li>• Provide assistance to teachers whose students are not reaching Tier 3 targets by developing an instructional plan based on student's record of assessment, performance data, and teacher input</li> </ul>

<b>Instructional Support Team (IST)</b>  <i>There may be numerous other names given to this body, such as student assistant team, TAT, at-risk team, and student support team. The name given to this team is usually a school-based decision.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designated classroom teachers</li> <li>• Special education teacher</li> <li>• School psychologist</li> <li>• Administrators as appropriate</li> <li>• Other specialists as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist teachers in their efforts to help the students who struggle in their classrooms, including those in special education</li> <li>• Consider all educational areas that can affect or interfere with student achievement and school success, including academics, behavior, and health</li> <li>• Prevent school failure by looking at the whole child, realizing that oftentimes more than one issue is involved when a student is struggling</li> </ul>
<b>IEP Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special educator</li> <li>• Individual who can interpret and critically analyze assessments and intervention data</li> <li>• Administrators</li> <li>• Parent</li> <li>• Classroom teacher</li> <li>• Student, when appropriate</li> <li>• Other teachers, specialists, representatives, as needed</li> </ul>	<p><b>Initial:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine a student's eligibility for special education</li> <li>• Design an Individual Education Plan (IEP), which sets educational goals for the student and gives details about the educational supports and services that will help the child with a disability receive valuable instruction in special education</li> </ul> <p><b>Annual review:</b> Revise student's IEP as needed</p> <p><b>Re-evaluation:</b> Determine whether student is still eligible for special education services</p>
<b>Data Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrators as appropriate</li> <li>• Teacher representatives</li> <li>• Teacher specialists as appropriate (e.g., speech, school psychologist, Title I, literacy coach, ELL teacher)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster student learning by reviewing student data to make informed decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment, as follows:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Assemble and examine achievement and other data</li> <li>◦ Identify specific concerns from school test reports and subgroup data</li> <li>◦ Interpret school data to determine goals</li> <li>◦ Determine appropriate interventions to reach goals</li> <li>◦ Determine what data will be used to monitor progress and document success in reaching goals</li> <li>◦ Identify data patterns</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



### Secondary Administrator's Implementation Checklist

<b>Preliminary Strategies</b>	<b>0</b> Lack skills or basic knowledge of this practice	<b>1</b> Just starting to learn this practice (Beginning Phase)	<b>2</b> Developing skill with this practice (Intermediate Phase)	<b>3</b> Fully competent in this practice (Advanced Phase)
1. Do teachers have knowledge of current Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) practices?				
2. Do they understand and effectively implement scientifically based reading strategies in all content areas, emphasizing fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension?				
3. Are the teachers knowledgeable of Utah Secondary Core Curricula teaching the appropriate standards and objectives?				
4. Have teachers received training in the 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction?				
5. Are collaborative support teams in place to support teachers and review student progress?				
6. Is there a school-wide, seamless instructional program that includes materials, assessment, strategies, and procedures?				
<b>Tier 1</b>	<b>0</b> Lack skills or basic knowledge of this practice	<b>1</b> Just starting to learn this practice (Beginning Phase)	<b>2</b> Developing skill with this practice (Intermediate Phase)	<b>3</b> Fully competent in this practice (Advanced Phase)
<b>Assessments and Evaluation:</b>				
1. As a faculty, have the teachers reviewed the students' overall performance on Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs)?				
2. Have school-wide strengths and weaknesses been identified for each subject?				
3. Is benchmark testing in place to monitor the students' reading progress during the current school year?				
4. Is the teacher monitoring student progress?				
5. Is there data being collected to evaluate student performance?				

<b>Materials:</b>				
1. Are the teachers using SBRR-based core program materials that emphasize fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension?				
2. Are supplemental reading materials present in the classroom to support high quality literacy instruction (classroom library, guided reading materials, nonfiction materials, etc.)?				
<b>Scheduling:</b>				
1. Has an additional class period been provided for struggling readers?				
2. Do students read throughout the day across other content areas?				
3. Are students able to receive additional literacy support before or after school?				
<b>Grouping:</b>				
1. Does the teacher provide whole class, small group, differentiated, and individual instruction during Tier 1 instruction?				
<b>Instructional Setting:</b>				
1. Has the classroom been arranged to accommodate whole class, small group, and individual literacy instruction?				
2. Is the classroom a literature-rich environment with books on all reading ability levels, interest levels, and genres available for students to use?				
<b>Highly Qualified Instructor:</b>				
1. Is the teacher highly skilled and able to provide high quality reading instruction?				
2. Are appropriate management techniques and procedures in place and utilized to facilitate quality instruction?				
3. Are professional development activities available to support instruction?				
<b>Assistants/Volunteers:</b>				
1. Do classroom assistants/volunteers receive appropriate training?				
2. Do the teachers appropriately utilize classroom assistants and volunteers during instruction?				

Tier 2	0 Lack skills or basic knowledge of this practice	1 Just starting to learn this practice (Beginning Phase)	2 Developing skill with this practice (Intermediate Phase)	3 Fully competent in this practice (Advanced Phase)
<b>Assessment and Evaluation:</b>				
1. Have teachers conducted screening assessments to identify struggling readers?				
2. Have diagnostic assessments been administered to students to identify specific deficits?				
3. Is progress monitoring in place to assess student progress at least every two weeks?				
4. Is the collaborative team being utilized to support the classroom teacher?				
<b>Materials:</b>				
1. Are teachers using SBRR materials that target specific diagnosed needs and support Tier 1 instruction?				
<b>Scheduling:</b>				
1. Is time allocated every day for Tier 2 supplemental instruction (a recommendation of one additional class period)?				
2. Do struggling students read throughout the day across other content areas?				
3. Are schedules designed to ensure that students do not miss core subjects or graduation requirements?				
4. Are students able to receive additional literacy support before or after school?				
<b>Grouping:</b>				
1. Are students receiving Tier 2 supplemental instruction by being enrolled in at least one instructional period of focused reading instruction for struggling readers?				
<b>Instruction:</b>				
1. Is the targeted instruction systematic and explicit?				
2. Is the instruction engaging, providing opportunities for multiple student responses?				
3. Are students receiving appropriate feedback and scaffolding?				
<b>Instructional Setting:</b>				
1. Have locations been identified to accommodate small instructional groups?				

<b>Highly Qualified Instructor:</b>				
1. Is there a highly qualified reading teacher providing Tier 2 instruction?				
2. Are appropriate management techniques and procedures in place and utilized to facilitate quality instruction?				
3. Are professional development activities available to support Tier 2 instruction?				
<b>Assistants/Volunteers:</b>				
1. Do the classroom assistants/volunteers receive training to support struggling readers?				
2. Do well-trained assistants/volunteers provide additional reading practice, <b>not instruction</b> ?				
<b>Parents:</b>				
1. Are methods in place to inform parents about their student's literacy progress?				

Tier 3	0	1	2	3
	Lack skills or basic knowledge of this practice	Just starting to learn this practice (Beginning Phase)	Developing skill with this practice (Intermediate Phase)	Fully competent in this practice (Advanced Phase)
<b>Assessment and Evaluation:</b>				
1. Have the struggling readers not making adequate progress in Tier 2 instruction received further evaluation?				
2. Have diagnostic assessments been administered to identify specific deficits?				
3. Is progress monitoring in place to assess student progress at least every week?				
<b>Materials:</b>				
1. Do materials and methods provide the intensity of instruction needed?				
2. Do materials support Tier 1 instruction?				
<b>Scheduling:</b>				
1. Is sufficient time allocated every day for Tier 3 intensive targeted instruction (an additional class period, in addition to Tier 1 instruction)?				
2. Do struggling students read throughout the day across other content areas?				
3. Are schedules designed to ensure that students do not miss core subjects or graduation requirements?				
4. Are students able to receive additional literacy support before or after school?				

<b>Grouping:</b>				
1. Are students receiving Tier 3 intensive targeted instruction in small (2 to 3) homogeneous groups?				
<b>Instruction:</b>				
1. Is the targeted instruction systematic, explicit, and highly intensive?				
2. Is the instruction engaging, providing opportunities for multiple student responses?				
3. Are students receiving appropriate feedback and scaffolding?				
<b>Instructional Setting:</b>				
1. Have locations been identified to accommodate small instructional groups?				
<b>Highly Qualified Instructor:</b>				
1. Are interventions delivered by highly qualified specialists?				
2. Are appropriate management techniques and procedures in place and utilized to facilitate quality instruction?				
3. Are professional development activities available to support Tier 3 instruction?				
<b>Assistants/Volunteers:</b>				
1. Do the classroom assistants/volunteers receive appropriate training to support struggling readers?				
2. Do assistants/volunteers provide additional reading practice, not instruction?				
<b>Parents:</b>				
1. Are methods in place to inform parents about their student's literacy progress?				

## Survey of Teacher Priorities

This survey assists principals, teachers, reading specialists and coaches to prioritize planning for instruction, intervention, assessment, and agendas for professional learning communities. Mark the appropriate topics as high, medium, or low priority to focus planning. The document may be used as a planning tool for a school, grade level, individual teacher, or team of teachers.

Focus for Instructional Planning	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
Oral language			
Phonemic awareness			
Phonics/spelling			
Fluency			
Vocabulary			
Comprehension			
Content reading instruction			
Writing			
Differentiated instruction			
Interventions for struggling readers			
Selecting appropriate materials			
Classroom management			
Classroom environment (e.g. student engagement, setting)			
Large/small group reading instruction			
Research-based literacy instruction			
Selecting appropriate assessments			
Using assessment results to inform instruction			
Monitoring student progress			
Providing explicit instruction			
Providing tutoring and supplemental practice			
Professional development			
Providing parent support and instruction			

### Assessments Currently Being Used by Districts to Support Intervention and Instruction

The following is a sample of some of the assessments that have been reviewed by the Utah State Office of Education in relationship to Utah's 3 Tier Model of Reading Instruction. For additional assessments see Utah's list of reviewed literacy assessments online at: [http://www.schools.utah.gov/cour/flag\\_art/elem/core/ASSESSMENTS.pdf](http://www.schools.utah.gov/cour/flag_art/elem/core/ASSESSMENTS.pdf).

Reviewed Assessments				
Assessment	Publisher	Grade	Target Areas	Notes
AIMS/CBM	Edformation Inc./Harcourt Assessment	K-12	PA, PH, F, S, C	S, PM, O
CORE Assessments Multiple Assessment Measures—Arena Press	CORE—Consortium for Reading Excellence—Arena Press	K-8	OL, PA, PH, S, V, C	S, D, PM, O
CRTs	USOE	K-6	OL, PA, PH, S, V, C	S, O
CTOPP	PRO-ED	K-3	PA	S, D, PM, O
DIBELS	Sopris West or download free from Univ. of Oregon	K-3 4-6	PA, PH, ORF	S, BM, PM, O
DRA	Pearson/Scott Foresman—Addison Wesley	K-3 4-8	PH, S, F, V, C	S, PM, O
DRP	TASA	k-12	C	S, D, PM, O
Gates/MacGinitie	Riverside	K-12	OL, CP, PA, PH, V, C	D,
Gray Oral Reading	PRO-ED	K-12	F, C	S, O
Peabody	American Guidance	K-12	V	S, D, O
Program embedded assessments	Program Publishers	K-12	As noted by publisher	
QRI	Addison-Wesley Longman	K-12	PH, F, C	S, PM, O
Running Records	Multiple publishers	K-12	Dependent on teacher expertise	S, PM, O
SORT-R	Slosson/Scholastic	K-12	V	S
SRI-Scholastic Reading Inventory	Scholastic	K-12	C	S, PM, O
TPRI	McGraw-Hill	K-3	OL, CP, PA, PH, F, V, C	S, D, PM, O
UALPA	USOE			S, O
Woodcock Reading Mastery	American Guidance	K-12	PH, V, C	S, D, PM, O
Woodcock-Johnson III	Riverside	K-3	OL, PA, PH, S, F, V, C	S, D, PM, O
Words Their Way Spelling Inventory	Prentice Hall	K-12	S	S, D, PM

#### Target Areas:

OL—Oral Language  
PA—Phonemic awareness  
PH—Phonics  
F—Fluency  
V—Vocabulary  
C—Comprehension

#### Notes:

S—Screening  
D—Diagnostic  
B—Benchmark  
PM—Progress monitoring  
O—Outcome

### 3 Tier Reading Programs

The following research-based programs have been reviewed as appropriate for Tiers 1, 2, or 3 when provided by licensed, skilled teachers. Practice materials have also been reviewed to be used by trained instructors. In providing intervention, appropriate instruction and materials should be matched to students' targeted needs. Materials for Tier 2 and Tier 3 must align with and support Tier 1 instruction. Materials are reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Tier 1 Comprehensive Literacy Programs				
Program	Publisher	Grade	Target Areas	Notes
Harcourt	Harcourt School Publishers	K-6	Comprehensive	
Houghton Mifflin Reading	Houghton Mifflin	K-6	Comprehensive	
Scott Foresman Reading	Pearson Scott Foresman	K-6	Comprehensive	
Open Court	SRA	K-6	Comprehensive	
Macmillan/McGraw-Hill	Macmillan/McGraw-Hill	K-6	Comprehensive	
Reader's Handbook	Great Source	6-12	Comprehensive	

Tier 2 Intervention Programs				
Program	Publisher	Suggested Grade	Target Areas	Notes
Corrective Reading	SRA	4-12	PA, P, F, V	a, b, c, d
Early Success	Houghton Mifflin	1-2	PA, P, F, V	i
Earobics	Earobics Literacy Launch	K-3	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d, j
Fast Track	SRA McGraw-Hill	4-8	F, V, C	a, b
Fundations	Wilson	K-3	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d
Journeys I & II	Voyager Learning	6-12	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, d, j, k
Language for Learning	SRA	K-1	Oral language	a, b, d, k
LIPS	Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes	K-12+	PA, P	a, b, c, d
Read 180	Scholastic	6-12	P, F, V, C	b, d, c, j, k
Reading Recovery	Ohio State University	1	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d, f
Reading For All Learners	Alan Hofmeister	K-3	P, F, C	
Reading Mastery	SRA	K-6	P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d, f
LANGUAGE	Sopris West	3-12	PA, P, F, V, C, Writing, word study	a, b, c, d, f, i, j, k



REWARDS	Sopris West	4-12	Word study, F, V	a, b, c, d, h
AMP Reading System	Globe Fearon/Pearson	7-12+	F, V, C	b, c, d, i, k
Early Reading Intervention	Pearson Scott Foresman	K-1	PA, P, F, V	a, b, c, d
Sidewalks	Scott Foresman	1-5	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d
Soar to Success	Houghton Mifflin	3-8	F, V, C	a, c, i
Writing Road to Reading	Spalding	K-6	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d, f
Voyager Passport	Voyager Learning	K-6	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d, k
Next Steps	U of U Reading Clinic	2+	PA, P, F	a, b, d, f, k
Reading Advantage	Great Source	6-12	P, F, V, C, Writing	a, b, c, j
Early Steps	U of U Reading Clinic	K-1	PA, P, F	a, b, d, f, k

Tier 3 Intensive Intervention Programs				
Program	Publisher	Grade	Target Areas	Notes
Corrective Reading	SRA	4-12	PA, P, F, V	a, b, c, d
Fluency Builders (Secondary only)	Alan Hofmeister		F, C	
Journeys I & II	Voyager Learning	4-12	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b
Kaleidoscope	SRA	2-6	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d
LANGUAGE!	Sopris West	3-12	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d
LIPS	Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes	K-12+	PA, P	a, b, c, d
Reading Recovery	Ohio State University	1		f
Read Well	Sopris West	1-3	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d
REWARDS	Sopris West	4-12	P, F	a, b, c, d
REWARDS PLUS	Sopris West	4-12	P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d
Visions	Thomson-Heinle	4-12	PA, P, F, C	d, k
Wilson Reading System	Wilson Language	3-12	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d, i

Supplemental Practice Programs (May Be Delivered by Trained Instructors)				
Program	Publisher	Grade	Target Areas	Notes
6 Minute Solution	Sopris West	K-8	F	d, e
Great Leaps	Great Leaps	K-12+	P, F	c, d
Early Intervention Reading	SRA (Torgesen)	K-3	PA, P, F, V, C	a, b, c, d,
Fluency Builders	Alan Hofmeister	3-6	F, C	
Fluency Theatre	Harcourt Achieve/Rigby/Steck-Vaughn	3-5	F, V, C	e
Quick Reads	Pearson Learning	3-9	F, V, C	e, j
Read Naturally	Read Naturally	1-8	F, C	a, b, c, d, i, j
Leap Track	Leap Frog Schoolhouse	K-3	PA, P, V, C	j
Open Book Learning	Open Book Learning	K-3	PA, P	j, k
Funnix	Funnix.com	K-2	PA, P, F, V	j
Reading For All Learners	Alan Hofmeister	K-3	PA, P, F, C	
Headsprouts	Headsprouts for School	K-2	PA, P, F, V, C	j
Waterford Early Reading System	Waterford	K-3	PA, P, F, V, C	j, k
Star Tutoring	USOE	1-3	PA, P, F, V, C	e, f
Star Cross-Age Tutoring	USOE	1-6	P, F, V, C	e, f
Star Parent Tutoring	USOE	1-3	F, V, C	e, f, k
Early Steps	U of U Reading Clinic	K-1	PA, P, F	a, b, d, f, k
Next Steps	U of U Reading Clinic	2+	PA, P, F	a, b, d, f, k

NOTE: Some basal programs have accompanying intervention programs/components that should be considered, if the approved basal is being used.

**Target Areas:**

PA—Phonemic awareness development required  
P—Phonics  
F—Fluency  
V—Vocabulary  
C—Comprehension

**Notes:**

a. explicit  
b. systematic  
c. student materials aligned  
d. ample practice provided  
e. practice only  
f. extensive training and/or professional  
g. school-wide implementation required  
h. can be implemented by a paraprofessional or  
i. extensive organization of materials required  
j. technology based program/technology support  
k. ELL component/support/accommodations

## Glossary

Accommodations:	Accommodations are practices and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting, and timing/scheduling that provide equitable access during instruction and assessments for students with disabilities/504/ELL. Accommodations are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability; they do not reduce learning expectations. Accommodations provide access to buildings, curriculum, and assessments. (See USOE Accommodations Guidelines for examples.)
Alignment:	The process of matching instruction and materials to the Utah State Core Curriculum.
Assessment:	See Literacy Assessments in the appendices.
Collaboration:	A systematic process of cooperation between two or more people with shared goals and perceived outcomes occurring in a climate of trust.
Collaborative team:	A group of two or more people (as described above) who meet on a scheduled or as-need basis and fill a specific function or purpose. Collaborative teams can be formed both at the district and school levels. School-based teams are developed and sustained as determined by need and are accessible to any administrator or teacher concerned with the educational needs of students.
Differentiated instruction:	The matching of instruction with the different needs of learners in a given classroom by modifying delivery, time, content, process, product, and the learning environment. One or more of these elements can be modified to provide differentiation.
English Language Learners (ELLs):	English Language Learners (ELLs) are students whose first language is not English and who are in the process of learning English.
Evaluation:	Summarizing assessment results, then making decisions based on these results.
Explicit instruction:	Instruction that is clear, overt, and visible.
504 Act:	A student is eligible for accommodations under Section 504 if the student has a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of the student's major life activities that affect education.
Fidelity:	A teacher demonstrates that instructional programs, strategies, and materials are implemented with intensity and accuracy, and consistently delivered as they have been designed and validated, as elaborated in teacher's guides available from publishers.
Five critical critical areas elements of reading: Curriculum for	Phonemic awareness, phonics/word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; of instruction for all Tiers. (See Elementary and Secondary Language Arts Core definitions.)

Implicit instruction:	An instructional ideology that assumes that students are naturally active learners who construct new personalized knowledge through linking prior knowledge and new knowledge. In implicit instruction, the teacher guides students only as much as is necessary for them to build their own understanding. Scaffolding, or teacher support through questioning and explaining, is provided only as needed.
Individual Education Plan (IEP):	A written statement for a student with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with the State of Utah Rules and Part B of IDEA 2004.
Individual Education Plan Team member (IEP):	At least one regular educator of the student, LEA representative, special education teacher, parent, student when appropriate, and person to interpret data, as well as others as needed.
Instructional intervention:	Explicit and systematic instruction delivered by highly skilled teachers tailored to meet the identified needs of struggling readers. This instruction is delivered in small groups.
Intense intervention:	Explicit and systematic instruction delivered by highly skilled teacher specialists. This instruction is targeted and tailored to meet the needs of struggling readers in small groups or one on one, with increased opportunities for practice and teacher feedback.
Literacy coach:	Provides ongoing, consistent support for classroom implementation and the instructional components of literacy. A literacy coach supports teachers in their daily work to instruct all readers, but particularly struggling readers. A literacy coach should not provide teacher job performance evaluations.
Modifications (assessments):	Changes in the test or assessment conditions that fundamentally alter the test score interpretation and comparability. Providing a student with a modification during a state accountability assessment constitutes a test irregularity because it invalidates the student's test score.
Modifications (classroom assessments may assignment):	Providing modifications to students during classroom instruction and/or classroom have the unintended consequence of reducing their opportunity to learn critical content. If students have not had access to critical, assessed content, they may be at risk for not meeting graduation requirements.
Multisensory:	Simultaneously engaging the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities.
Reading specialist:	Reading specialists provide expert classroom instruction and assessment particularly for struggling students. They may also provide literacy leadership within the school in addressing the needs of all readers.
Scaffolding:	Support given to assist students in learning a skill through explicit instruction, modeling, questioning, feedback, etc., to ensure student performance. Scaffolding should gradually be withdrawn as students become more independent of teacher support.

Scientifically Based	Refers to empirical research that applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain Reading Research (SBRR) valid knowledge. This research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment.</li> <li>• Has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective and scientific review.</li> <li>• Involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn.</li> <li>• Relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations.</li> <li>• Can be generalized.</li> </ul>
Skill:	Something a student knows how to do expertly and automatically.
Special education:	Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and instruction in physical education. The term includes speech-language pathology services and may include other related services, travel training, and applied technology education, if they meet the definition of special education.
Strategy:	The conscious use of a specific method.
Supplemental Intervention:	An addition to Tier 1 classroom instruction targeted to meet specific needs of students in one or more of the five critical elements of reading instruction.
Supplemental materials:	Materials that are aligned with and support the core instructional program.
Systematic instruction:	A carefully planned sequence for targeted instruction.
Targeted:	Focused instruction on an identified skill.
Tutoring:	Additional practice for struggling students provided by trained individuals. Tutoring does not serve as an intervention. USOE-published tutoring programs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>STAR</b> tutoring program</li> <li>• Cross-age tutoring program</li> <li>• Parent <b>STAR</b> tutoring program</li> <li>• <b>STAR</b> advanced tutoring program</li> </ul>
Utah Core Curriculum:	The Utah Board of Education defines standards of learning essential for all students, which define teacher instruction.

## Online Resources for Teachers

**Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills—DIBELS** <http://DIBELS.uoregon.edu> Set of standardized individually administered measures for early literacy development. Designed to be short (one minute) measures in phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, and fluency to connected text to regularly monitor development of pre-reading and early reading skills. Oral reading fluency measures exist for upper elementary grades and will be available for secondary schools.

**Florida Center for Reading Research—FCRR** <http://www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/CReports.aspx> Review of specific reading programs. Programs are described to the extent to which their content, organization and instructional strategies are consistent with scientifically based research in reading.

**Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement—Big Ideas in Beginning Reading** <https://reading.uoregon.edu> Reviews supplemental and intervention programs and instructional ideas for Reading First.

**Intervention Central** <http://www.interventioncentral.org> Academic and behavior strategies for classroom teachers based on current research.

**National Center on Student Progress Monitoring** <http://www.studentprogress.org> Reviews progress monitoring tools and has a chart of scientifically based tools to measure students' progress.

**Reading Rockets** <http://www.readingrockets.org> Provides research articles, techniques and strategies with parent information.

**What Works Clearinghouse** <http://www.w-w-c.org> Source for scientific evidence of what works in education.

### Utah State Office of Education (USOE)

[http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/lang\\_art/elem/resources.htm](http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/lang_art/elem/resources.htm)

[http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/lang\\_art/elem/organizations.htm](http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/lang_art/elem/organizations.htm)

[http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/lang\\_art/elm/ParentResources.htm](http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/lang_art/elm/ParentResources.htm)

<http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/star/default.htm>

Provides information on curriculum and instructional materials, literacy websites, professional organizations, STAR tutoring programs, and parent resources.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004\* states that, "A child must not be determined to be a child with a disability if the determinant factor for that determination is:

- 1) Lack of appropriate instruction in reading, including the essential components of reading instruction;
- 2) Lack of instruction in math; or
- 3) Limited English proficiency."

In accordance with USOE State Rules for Special Education (see Utah Special Education Rules\*), an "LEA must document a history of failed classroom interventions and/or programs, which, however appropriate and correctly implemented, proved ineffective, before referring a student for special education evaluation...."

In addition, the LEA shall have a process in place to assist general educators:

- "...in identifying and establishing interventions and/or programs for students having educational difficulties." (See Utah Special Education Rules.)\*
- "...evaluating, monitoring and documenting regular education interventions and/or programs\* for a student suspected of having a disability. (See Utah Special Education Rules.)\*

The 3 Tier Instruction Model, using the components outlined in the implementation guide, is a researched-based model enabling educators to comply with federal and state rules\* when referring a student for special education evaluation through K-12. Data collected during screening/benchmarking and progress monitoring could be the existing information for child find. After reviewing the existing data submitted by the general education classroom teacher, school-based team(s) shall make the determination whether further evaluation is appropriate to determine the need for Special Education or 504 services.

*\*At this time, the Utah Special Education Rules have not been finalized. The special education information on this page is applicable until these rules are finalized and may be subject to changes/modifications when the Utah Special Education Rules are finalized.*

## Appendix D

CMS RfI Overview PowerPoint Presentation



# RtI

## Response to Intervention

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**What is RtI?**

A systematic school-wide approach to implement a Response to Intervention program created by those responsible for implementation.

Further, RtI is a process that evolves with time and persistence and will answer the question of how CMS responds when a student is not learning.

Twickler, 2007

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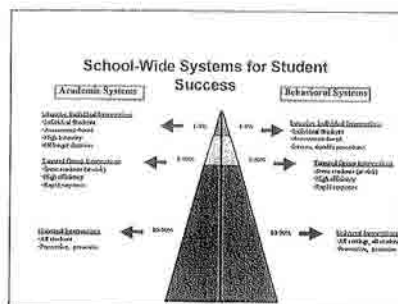
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### The Three Tiers

- **Tier 1:** Core classroom instruction for all students utilizing scientifically based reading research to teach critical elements outlined in the Utah Core Curriculum
- **Tier 2:** Supplemental, targeted interventions for struggling readers aligned to core instruction
- **Tier 3:** Intensive, targeted intervention for students with serious reading difficulties who have not made adequate progress in Tiers 1 and 2

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### A little history...

- o RTI has been around for many years
- o NCLB 2002 & IDEA 2004
- o Elementaries seeing success
- o New to the Secondary level = challenges:
  - Class Scheduling Issues
  - Multiple subjects
  - Consensus building among a more diverse staff
  - Integration of consistent positive behavior supports school-wide

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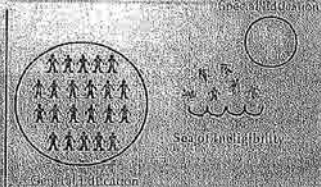
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### System Prior to Change




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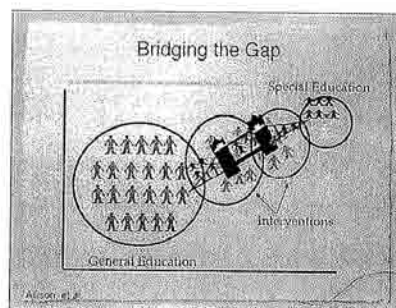
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**Paradigm shift:  
A different way of thinking**

- "a paradigm is a generally accepted model of how ideas relate to one another forming a conceptual framework or an example that serves as a pattern or model for something, especially one that forms the basis of a methodology or theory"

Howell

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**CMS is Ready for the Next Step!**

- Aligning Core
- Professional Learning Communities
- Data Driven Decision Making
- SAMS
- Success for ALL students
- "OUR" Students philosophy

*Historical Perspective  
for CMS*

*This is what has led  
to the next step*

*Philosophical Background*

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### CMS Support Programs Already in Progress

- ESL Program
- Basic Reading classes
- Basic Math classes
- Study Hall
- Resource Study Hall
- Art Plus Program
- Skill Building
- Advisory
- Student Support Team (SST)

How can we connect these?  
Effectiveness will progress  
by a "systematic" approach

### Cedar Middle School Mission Statement

Our quest for knowledge will be achieved by providing a quality education that empowers individuals to become caring, competent, responsible citizens who value learning as a lifelong process.

### What is RtI?

RtI is the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student needs and using learning rate over time and level of performance to make important educational decisions.

NAESSE, 2006

### What are the benefits of RTI?

- Increased student achievement
- Decreased special education referrals
- All students who need intervention receive it
- Increased teacher involvement
- Increased student involvement
- Increased parent involvement

*"We aren't doing it alone"*

### RtI Core Principles

- We can effectively teach all children
- Intervene early
- Use a multi-tier model of service delivery
- Use a problem-solving methodology

NASDSE 2005

### RtI Core Principles (cont'd)

- Use research-based, scientifically validated interventions/instruction
- Monitor student progress to inform instruction
- Use data to make decisions
- Use assessments for three different purposes: (1) screening; (2) diagnosis; and (3) progress monitoring




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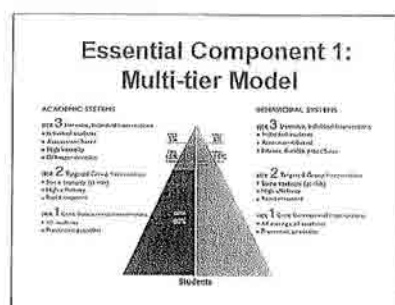
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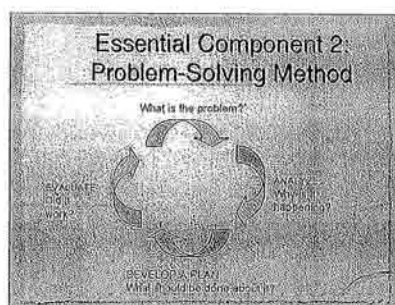
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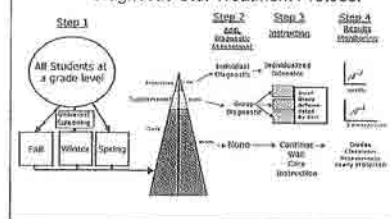
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### Essential Component 3: Integrated Assessment Systems

- Clearly assess specific skills in students
- Assess "marker variables" (measures used to lead to the primary instructional goal, e.g., reading comprehension) relevant to other kinds of growth
- Valid
- Reliable
- Easy to use
- User-friendly to instructional decision-making

*SAMS can help with this process*

### How Does it Fit Together? Group-Level Diagnostic Std. Treatment Protocol



### Tier 1: Key Reminders

- Quality core instruction (all content areas)
  - Explicit
  - Systematic
  - Differentiated
- Content area literacy
- School-wide reading assessments at least 3 times per year
- Ongoing professional development

### Tier 2: Key Reminders

- Targets struggling readers identified from benchmark testing assessments
- Supplemental, targeted instruction in addition to core instruction that is explicit and systematic
- Instruction focuses on essential areas of phonemic awareness, word fluency, reading fluency, vocabulary and comprehension
- Includes progress monitoring that informs instruction and adjusts intensity when appropriate

### Tier 3: Key Reminders

- Increased intensity
- Strategic, specially designed instruction in reading
- Weekly progress monitoring
- Longer term

### How is Tier 3 different from Tier 2?

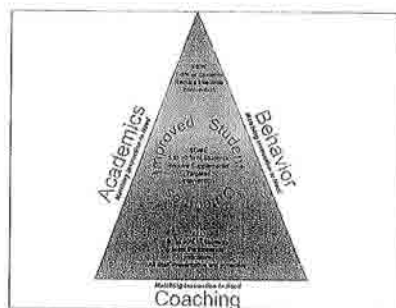
#### MORE:

- Intensive
- Time (includes pay day and duration)
- Opportunities for practice
- Progress monitoring

#### EXTRA:

- Explicit modeling and feedback
- Explicit teaching of strategies
- Explicit teaching of skills
- Explicit teaching of strategies






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**Where do we begin?**

- 6th Reading?

"We are there"  
Teacher / Team questions  
are revolving around  
the "How?"

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**How long does it take to implement fully the problem-solving/RTI process?**

- Evidence from Iowa and Minnesota would suggest that it takes 4-6 years (or more) to complete full implementation. Full implementation includes policy and regulatory change, staff development, and development of building/district-based procedures.




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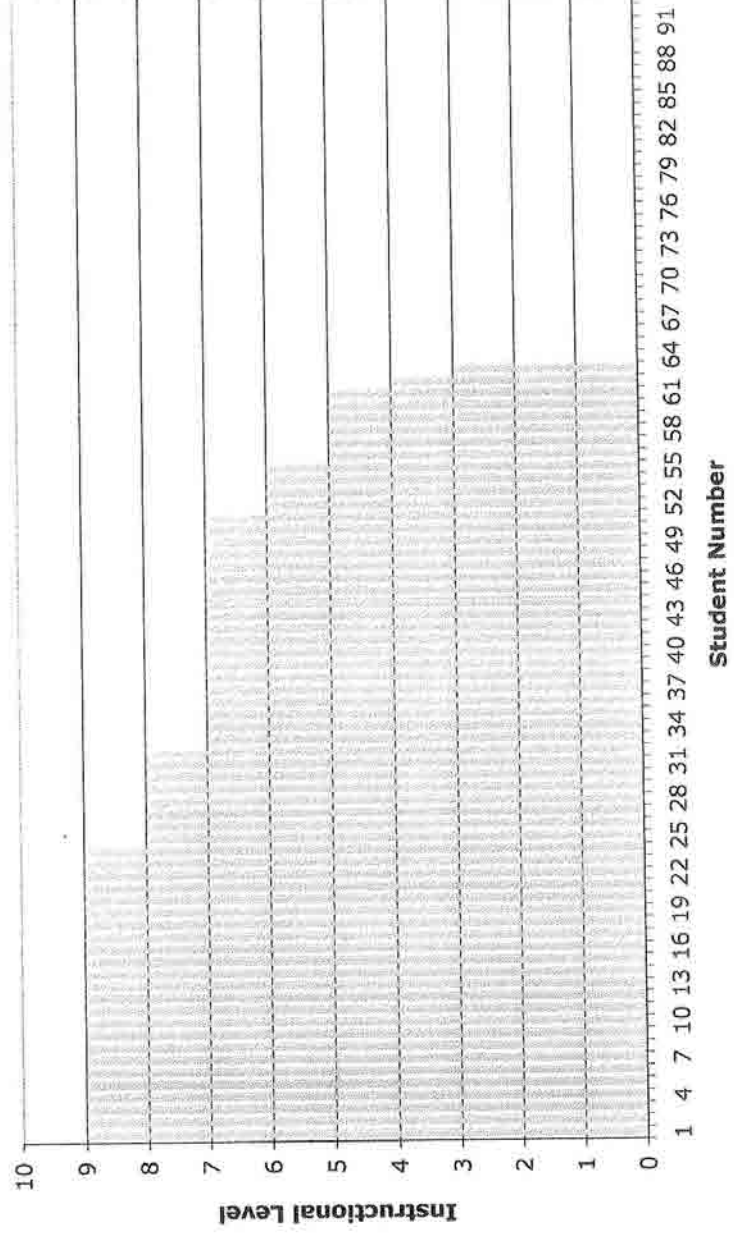
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Appendix E  
QRI-III Data Sheet

# **All Classes QRI Fall 2007**



## Appendix F

### Study Hall Program Description

### **Study Hall Program**

Study Hall is a student academic modification program designed to provide students with the opportunity to improve their overall academic competencies; thus, improving their academic standings. There will also be an emphasis on students understanding the importance of completing assigned homework at home.

#### **Student Referral Process:**

1. Due Process (Teacher)
2. Parent Notification (Teacher)
3. Parent recommendation
4. Referral sheet and student work delivered to Study Hall the day before students are admitted into the program.
5. A copy of the referral placed in elective teacher's box on the day of referral
6. Student notified of required attendance in Study Hall and which period on the day prior to attendance

#### **Program Criteria and Goals:**

1. Study Hall will be a place to complete past due assignments and/or work on concepts to pass assessments with a satisfactory score.
2. If the same student is referred to Study Hall more than once the elective course missed for Study Hall may differ depending on the students' standings in each elective/non-academic course.
3. A student may attend 10<sup>th</sup> period Study Hall rather than miss his/her elective course at the request of the parent; however, transportation will be the responsibility of the parent.

#### **Study Hall Procedures:**

1. The Study Hall environment will remain structured and quiet with the T.A. giving assistance when needed.
2. Students will work quietly for the entire duration of the period. The T.A. will monitor progress on a continual basis enforcing high expectation for quality output.
3. Once the student has completed his/her work all documentation will be noted. All completed work will be collected by the afternoon T.A. and placed in the appropriate teacher's box at the end of the day. T.A. will also notify the elective teacher and referring teacher that the student will be returning.
4. Under the supervision/assistance of Kasey Reese the T.A. will establish and maintain a structured environment that reflects high expectations and holds students accountable. Non-compliant students will be referred to the administration for disciplinary actions.
5. CHS Teen Mentors will be available to help offer more one-on-one tutoring.

### **“At Risk” Program**

The “At Risk” program is designed to monitor students that have demonstrated a high probability of failing academically. Students will be given the time and opportunity to complete assignments, learn required concepts, and acquired the tools needed to be a successful student. This program is run in conjunction with the Study Hall and Skill Building Programs.

#### **Student Referral Process:**

1. Qualifying students have a quarterly cumulative GPA of 1.667 or less
2. Parent/Student/Administrative conference
3. Academic contract

#### **Program Criteria and Goals:**

1. All student grades are monitored at the end of each quarter. Students remain on the “At Risk” list for the entire time they are at CMS.
2. Students will be monitored on a weekly basis and dependant upon remedial needs may be assigned to Study Hall for one to three full days.
3. Teachers will be notified in advanced and they will supply all past due and current assignments, tests, concepts to be learned and/or to be completed to Study Hall.
4. Completed assignments and tests will be placed in the appropriate teacher’s boxes at the end of each day.

#### **Procedures:**

1. During the student’s first referral to Study Hall they will receive instruction on Organizational Skills, Study Habits and characteristics of successful students by the Skill Building area.
2. Upon the third referral to Study Hall the student will be placed on an academic tracker and held accountable.
3. Academic Trackers will be handled through the Skill Building Program in the same manner as the Skills Trackers.
4. If a student earns a “4” on a tracker he/she will be required to attend the After School Program (10<sup>th</sup> period) the following day.
5. A copy of the tracker with a “4” on it will be given to the administration for disciplinary action and to the student’s advisor for further help of organizational skills, specific needs, etc.

### **After School Program**

The After School Program, 10<sup>th</sup> period or 2:30 to 3:10, is an extension service of the Study Hall Program intended to further meet individual needs of the students and/or school requirement.

**Attendance:**

1. Students requesting 10<sup>th</sup> period rather than missing elective courses
2. Parent requesting for additional help for students or monitored study time
3. Students receiving a "4" on an Academic Tracker
4. Students with excessive tardies

**Program Criteria and Goals:**

1. The same requirements and high expectations should be required for this time frame as during the normal school day.

**After School Procedures:**

1. Study Hall T.A.'s will be notified by the administration if assigning a student
2. Study Hall T.A.'s will notify the administration if an assigned student does not attend

(\*\*Students with an "in-school suspension" disciplinary action may be assigned to the Study Hall or Skill Building room.)



Academic/Study Hall Referral  
Cedar Middle School

Students Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Referring Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Parent Contact \_\_\_\_\_  
Elective Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_  
Approximate Days \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

Day Out \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Student Contract for Academic Improvement

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Current GPA \_\_\_\_\_ Advisor \_\_\_\_\_

### Barriers to my academic success:

- ☐ poor attendance
- ☐ not paying attention in class
- ☐ failure to take notes
- ☐ poor test performance
- ☐ failure to complete assignments
- ☐ failure to turn in assignments
- ☐ turning in assignments late
- ☐ not filling in my planner
- ☐ not asking for help
- ☐ poor attitude
- ☐ poor organizational skills

### My course of action:

- ☐ fill in planner every day every period
- ☐ pay attention in class
- ☐ take notes
- ☐ attend class
- ☐ ask questions
- ☐ stay after school with a teacher
- ☐ get organized
- ☐ turn in assignments
- ☐ make better use of time
- ☐ improve attitude

I understand that if my GPA falls below 1.667 I will be referred to Study Hall (all day) for 2-3 days or until my grades improve. During this time I will be given the opportunity to complete past due assignments and also study effective organizational skills for which I will be held accountable.

If referred to the "All Day" Study Hall more than twice I will be placed on an Academic Tracker. If I earn a "4" on my tracker I will be required to attend the After School Study Hall Program for each "4" earned. Earning my way off this tracker can be accomplished by going 20 consecutive days without earning a "4".

*Study Hall is a privilege and I must use my time wisely or I will suffer additional consequences.*

I understand that my grades affect my eligibility to attend extra curricular activities. In order for me to attend extra curricular activities I must earn a GPA of 3.0 or higher and cannot have any N's or U's as citizenship marks.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Administrator/School Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Cedar Middle School

Academic Tracker  
2007-2008

Name:

Date:

Grade:

Target Goals	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>
1. Write assignments in daily planner.									
2. Turn assignments in on time.									
Teacher's Initial									

Ratings: 1= Awesome!!!

2= Good

3= Warning

4= Needs Practice! Report to after school program beginning \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Comments:

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Parent's Comments:

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Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### Academic Tracker 2008-2009

Name: Ima N Proving

Date: September 1, 2008

Grade: 7th

Target Goals	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>
1. Handed in assignments in a timely fashion									
2. Filled out planner									
Teacher's Initial									

Ratings: 1= Awesome!!!  
2= Good

3= Warning  
4= Needs Practice (Stay after school!)

Teacher's Comments:

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Parent's Comments:

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Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

If I have a 4, I will need to stay after school on \_\_\_\_\_

If a student receives a "4" they may avoid staying for the After School program the following day by doing the following:

- a. Completing past due assignments at home
- b. Turn in assignments to teacher that gave the "4"
- c. Student asks for a note from the teacher stating he/she is caught up
- d. Student gives that note to Mrs. Twitchell by 11:00 am on the day they were to stay after school

### *Successful Student Job Description*

*Successful Students* are always **prepared**.

*Successful Students* **prioritize** time and responsibilities.

*Successful Students* **plan** on being successful-believe in themselves and trust their strengths, abilities, and skills.

*Successful Students* **question** information that is not understood.

*Successful Students* **learn** how to learn.

*Successful Students* cultivate a **love for learning**.

*Successful Students* seek out what **learning style** is best for them and study to maximize strategies that match their strengths.

*Successful Students* find a **location** where study is best optimized.

*Successful Students* develop **routine study habits**.

*Successful Students* look for ways to stay **motivated**.

*Successful Students* take **responsibility** for their education.

*Successful Students* set **realistic goals**.

*Successful Students* take advantage of all **school resources**.

*Successful Students* **finish** what they start!

*Successful Students* treat teachers with the same **courtesy and respect** that they would like from them.

**Classroom Behavior of Successful Students:**

- Follow directions.
- Sit in the front of the class if they have trouble attending to the teacher.
- Make eye contact with the teacher.
- Nod-up and down not side to side with your head as a means of communicating with your teacher.
- Do not miss class.
- Listen carefully.
- Turn in all work on time.
- Participate in class discussions.
- Keep up with classes each day-do not get behind.
- Complete all assignments.
- Ask questions.
- Get to class on time.
- Show respect to the teacher and fellow students.

### *How Organized Am I?*

Check the statements in this list that describe you.

- ◇ My backpack is organized and free of crumbled or loose papers.
- ◇ I come to class with sharpened pencils and pens that work.
- ◇ I am prepared for class most of the time.
- ◇ I know what my assignments are because they are written down in my planner.
- ◇ I can easily find what I need.
- ◇ I have a notebook, binder, or multi-subject binder with dividers for each subject.
- ◇ I rarely lose or forget anything.
- ◇ I know where my papers and notes are for every class.
- ◇ I think of myself as well organized.

---

Name three steps you could take to help you improve.

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

## Appendix G

### Example Parent Letter



Hello this is \_\_\_\_\_. I am \_\_\_\_\_  
(Teacher's Name) (Student's name)

reading/core teacher. I'm calling because I wanted to let you know that CMS is starting a reading intervention program for students who are struggling in reading. We have been doing some intensive reading testing and it looks like \_\_\_\_\_ is  
(Student's name)

struggling with his/her comprehension. I just wanted to let you know that I/we will be giving him/her some extra reading instruction geared to the area he/she is struggling with. They will not be pulled out of any core classes that are tested by the state. I think you will see a great improvement in his/her confidence and ability to do their work in all classes.

I just wanted to let you know that I/we are doing everything we can to make sure that \_\_\_\_\_ succeeds in school in  
(Student's name)

in all academic areas.

Thank-you for your support.

## Appendix H

### Suggestions for Home Literacy Involvement

### **Suggestions To Improve Fluency**

- \*Teach your children songs and poems that are fun to sing and say (for example, songs like "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" and poems like "Wee Willie Winkie" or "Little Miss Muffet").
- \*encourage your child to read aloud to you and even re-read the same story several times.
- \*Read to your child as well and have them follow along as they read.

### **Suggestions To Improve Comprehension**

- \*Make sure the books they are reading are on the correct reading level
- \*Ask your children questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer. Some questions that help them to talk more openly are "Why do you think that happened?" "What do we do next?" "What would happen if we did it this way?" "What can we do about that?" "How can we make this better?"
- \*Read stories to your children and have them tell the stories back to you.
- \*Pick a topic of interest to your child and have them learn new things about it. Ask them to tell you and other family members what they have learned.

### **Suggestions To Help Decode Words**

- \*Play games like "how many words can you make using the letters in spaghetti?"
- \*Practice the beginning sounds of words.

### **Suggestions To Help Motivate Kids to Read**

- \*Learn more about your child's interests
- \*Sometimes good movies are a starting point for pleasure reading
- \*Sometimes travel sparks reading
- \*Keeps books and other reading materials at home.
- \*Read books with your children!
- \*Be a good role model

## Appendix I

### CMS Newsletter Example

### Welcome to the Cedar Middle School Warrior News

Dear Parents and Students,

The Christmas Holidays are nearly upon us. Our last day of school for this year will be December 21<sup>st</sup>. School will resume on Monday, January 7<sup>th</sup>. As a faculty, we could like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Please take the time to hug your kids and take good care of them. The most valuable thing that you can give them is your time.

I would like to dedicate most of this letter to inform you of great things that are taking place at our school. Recent data received from the state regarding the **IOWA Test of Basic Skills** indicate that Cedar Middle School is making tremendous progress academically. The ITBS is a test given in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. It is given in the fall each year to assess student progress. Our 8<sup>th</sup> graders did remarkably well in every, single category. The total composite score increased by 6 points school-wide. This is a remarkable improvement. Most schools would be ecstatic with a 1-point improvement. We see this as an indicator that we have great things going on in our school. Our dedicated teachers deserve recognition for their commitment. Our students deserve accolades for all the hard work that they do. We feel like our study hall and remediation programs are having an impact on student achievement, and we would like to express our gratitude for parental support. Beginning in January we will be implementing some new strategies that we think will continue to raise the student achievement bar.

Our Response to Intervention, also referred to as RtI, is geared to help ALL students experience success. To begin with, we will focus specifically on

reading comprehension. Our CORE teachers across all grade levels have completed extensive reading assessments to determine comprehension levels of all students. We are now compiling the data that we will use to develop an intensive remediation program to help struggling readers.

We have found that there are a lot of kids who can read but don't necessarily comprehend. Our intent is to shift the paradigm of "Learning to Read" to "Reading to Learn." The end result can and will help all of these students achieve more academically in all subject areas. A prime example of this would be in science. If a student struggles to read and or comprehend text in a science class, it is going to be challenging to learn. If we can boost their reading level, we can in turn affect their science abilities.

This program will require extra effort on our part, as well as the students and parents. Please be supportive in the event that we ask for a schedule change or extra reading at home. We will be producing a brochure soon that will provide additional information and reading strategies. Remember the end result. Anything that is worthwhile is hard. It will be a three-tiered approach that will provide specific interventions and intense instruction to students that are below grade level in reading. Our school is becoming a model school that many are watching. We are really the first secondary school to attempt such a program, school-wide, in the state of Utah, so climb on board.

Sincerely,  
Your Principal

Appendix J  
CMS RtI Brochure

## Strategies Parents Can Use To Improve Reading

### Suggestions To Improve Fluency

- \*Teach your children songs and poems that are fun to sing and say.
- \*Encourage your child to read aloud to you and even re-read the same story several times.
- \*Read to your child as well and have them follow along as they read.

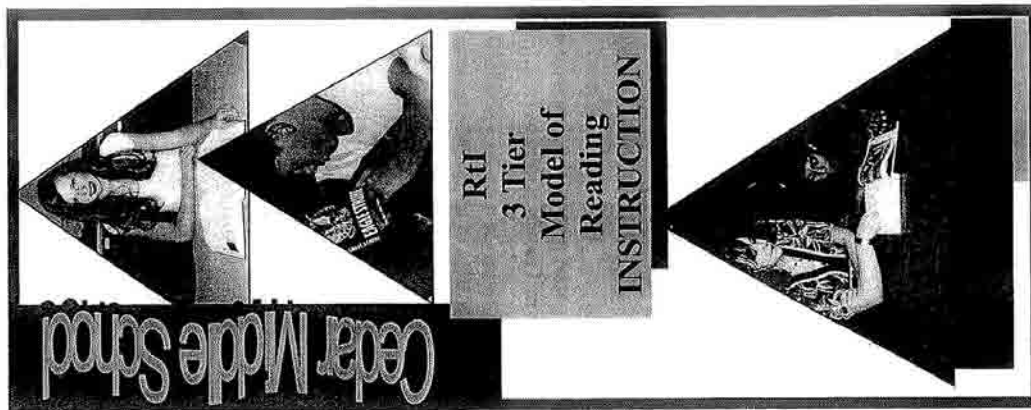
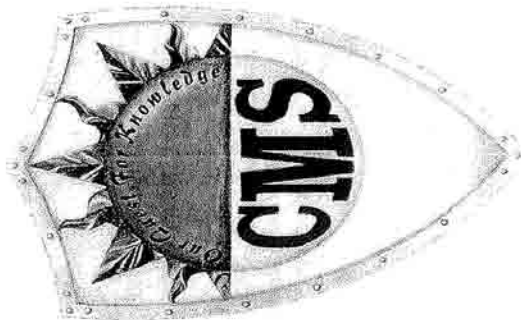
### Suggestions To Improve Comprehension

- \*Make sure the books they are reading are on the correct reading level.
- \*Ask your children questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer.
- \*Read stories to your children and have them tell the stories back to you.
- \*Pick a topic of interest to your child and have them learn new things about it.
- \*Ask them to tell you and other family members what they have learned.

### Suggestions To Help Decode Words

- \*Play games like "how many words can you make using the letters in spaghetti?"
- \*Practice the beginning sounds of words.

Cedar Middle School  
2215 W. Royal Hunte Dr.  
Cedar City, Utah 84720



## RtI

### (Response To Intervention)

Cedar Middle School is excited to implement a systematic RtI Model that is designed to improve every student's reading ability.

Response to Intervention is a program designed as an early intervention to prevent long-term academic failure.

The middle school years are considered a transitional period. The shift is from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Subsequently, our focus is on comprehension. Extensive testing indicates a definite need for additional instruction to promote improved literacy in the classrooms.

RtI employs research-based interventions to individualize instruction, monitor individual student progress, and implement strategies to meet the specific needs of all students. This valuable program will assist students in their journey toward literacy.

## The 3 Tiers

### Tier 1: Core Classroom Instruction

Tier 1 refers to core classroom instruction for all students using scientifically based reading research to teach critical elements outlined in the Utah Core Curriculum. Most students will demonstrate proficiency with effective Tier 1 instruction.

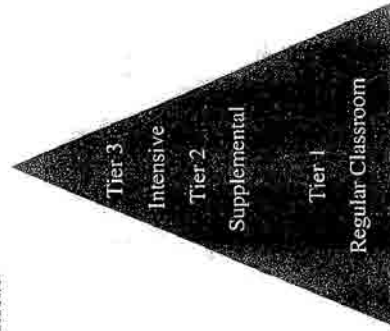
### Tier 2: Supplemental Targeted Instruction

Tier 2 provides supplemental, targeted instruction in addition to Tier 1, and addresses the specific needs of students who are falling behind in Tier 1. Tier 2 interventions will be targeted, scientifically based, and aligned with core classroom instruction. The duration of this instruction varies based on student assessment and progress monitoring data, and it is generally provided by a teacher or trained aide.

### Tier 3: Intensive Targeted Intervention

Tier 3 is designed to provide intensive, targeted intervention to the most at-risk readers, those who have not responded adequately to Tier 2 instruction. A small percentage (3-5 percent) usually has severe reading difficulties and require instruction that is more explicit, more intensive, and specifically designed to meet their individual needs. This intervention is extended over a longer period of time and addresses individual student needs. Tier 3 intervention replaces Tier 2 instruction, and is provided by a specialist.

Student movement through the 3 Tiers is a fluid process based on student assessment data and collaborative team decisions.





Appendix K  
CMS RtI Report Card

**Cedar Middle School**  
**Response to Intervention Report Card**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**REWARDS Scores**

Pretest 10/2009		Fluency Pretest 10/2009	
Posttest 04/2010		Fluency Posttest 04/2010	

**School Wide Testing (Comprehension Average Score in grade level)**

10/2009	01/2010	04/2010

**Tier 2 Program 10/2009-04/2010**

**Pretest:** List of words taught in the REWARDS program. This is used to measure prior knowledge of decoding and sight words.

**Posttest:** Same list of words as the pretest, given upon completion of the REWARDS program. This measures growth of student knowledge in decoding skills.

**Fluency:** Measures student's rate of reading, one minute timing on a middle school level passage.

**QRI:** Qualitative Reading Inventory. Test used to measure comprehension level. Student reads a passage and orally answers between 8-10 questions about what they have read. This test is given throughout the school year.

**GRADE Assessment:** Reading assessment measuring sentence, passage and listening comprehension. Also measuring vocabulary knowledge.

**REWARDS program:** A specialized reading program designed to teach secondary students a flexible strategy for decoding long words and to increase their oral and silent reading fluency.

## Appendix L

RtI Student Placement Form (Tiers 2 and 3)

RtI Student Placement Form  
Tier Two

Student Name	Student Needs	Possible Group Times
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		

RTI Student Placement Form  
Tier Three

Student Name	Student Needs	Possible Group Times
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		

## Appendix M

### Student Success Team Referral Form

### Cedar Middle School Student Success Team Referral Form

Please fill out as much information as possible on your student being referred. Use the student's cumulative folder as well as SAMS to reference as needed. When all information possible is filled out, please turn the form into the special needs department.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

**Area of Concern:**

Behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Academic: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Notification (Mandatory): Date(s) of Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Notification:    Call    Letter    Conference

**Assessment Data**

IOWA (composite): 3<sup>rd</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 5<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 8<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

CRT (please fill in two previous years data): Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Math \_\_\_\_\_ Science \_\_\_\_\_ Language \_\_\_\_\_

Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Math \_\_\_\_\_ Science \_\_\_\_\_ Language \_\_\_\_\_

DIBELS: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade \_\_\_\_\_ WPM    Reading Comprehension: 6<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 7<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ 8<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

ESL: No \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_    Level (circle one): P    E    I    A    F

**Academic and Attendance Performance Data**

In Class Work: Completes Work? Always \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_\_\_ Never \_\_\_\_\_

Homework: Completes Work? Always \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ Rarely \_\_\_\_\_ Never \_\_\_\_\_

GPA (last 3 quarters/terms): \_\_\_\_\_

Year to Date Absences: \_\_\_\_\_

**Tier 1/Classroom Interventions (please check all interventions used):**

\_\_\_\_ Extra time on assignments/tests    \_\_\_\_ Utilized visuals (pictures, flashcards, etc.)    \_\_\_\_ Implemented behavior contract

\_\_\_\_ Reduced length on assignments/tests    \_\_\_\_ Modeled desired behavior/skill    \_\_\_\_ Supervision during transissions

\_\_\_\_ Opportunity for oral response on tests    \_\_\_\_ Emphasized class discipline plan/rules    \_\_\_\_ Other: (please explain below)

\_\_\_\_ Use of calculator/word processor    \_\_\_\_ Frequent/immediate feedback

\_\_\_\_ Changed instr.l materials/ methods/pace    \_\_\_\_ Shortened/repeated instructions

\_\_\_\_ Provided direct teaching of skill/concept    \_\_\_\_ Utilized systematic consequences/reinforcement

**Cedar Middle School Student Success Team Referral Form**

Tier 2: Enter Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Exit Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes/Results: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tier 3: Enter Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Exit Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes/Results: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**Other Interventions Needed:**

Assistance Before/After School

Notes/Results: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Study Hall:

Notes/Results: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Skill Building:

Notes/Results: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**SST Recommendation:**



## Classroom Interventions

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Core teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Resource Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

A List (at least 2 needed)	B List (at least 3 needed)
Extra time for completing assignments	Phone call home *Mandatory*
Reduced assignments/exam length	Parent/Student Conference *Mandatory*
Assignment notebook	Assistance before/after school
Opportunity to respond orally/oral exams	Assistance during prep times
Used calculators or word processor	Re-teach and re-test
Used computer-assisted instruction	Proximity (student to student/teacher to student)
Individualized homework assignments	Non Verbal Communication
Provided peer tutoring/note taker	Assignment chunking with accountability
Changed instructional materials, methods, pace	
Utilized supplemental materials	
Provided direct teaching of a skill/concept	
Provided modified drill and practice	
Shortened/repeated instructions	
Highlighted materials for emphasis	
Utilized visuals (pictures, flashcards, etc.)	
Modeled desired behavior	
Emphasized class wide discipline plan/rules	
Frequent feedback/immediate feedback	
Utilized systematic consequences, reinforcement	
Supervision when changing activities	Referred to Study Hall
Implemented behavior contract	Referred to Skill Building

Additional Comments or interventions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix N

### Skill Building Program Description Forms

### **Skill Building Program**

Skill Building is a 'leveled' student behavior modification program designed to provide students with appropriate behavior skills and self-assessing tools to be successful within the regular classroom. Additionally, the self-assessing tools and target value/social skills lessons taught will aid students in making better decisions and improve social relations. Skill Building may be used as an intervention before placing a student on an IEP.

#### **Student Referral Process:**

1. Due process within the classroom
2. Documented failed interventions by the teacher and parent notification
3. Referred to the administration by at least two teachers
4. Administration/student/parent conference

#### **Program Criteria and Goals:**

1. Skills will be a place to learn appropriate behavior while keeping up on classroom work. (Not a place for fun and games!)
2. The Skills program will emulate the regular classroom by being structured and emphasize/practice expected behaviors.
3. A modified schedule will be followed to cover each curriculum area possible plus at least two value lessons that include time for reflection.
4. *New 2007-08:* Students will be taught organizational skills and held accountable. (Organizational skills will also be emphasized school wide and specifically in the students' Advisory Class)
5. Coaches will communicate with teachers on a regular basis concerning behavior and progress. Also communicate with parents when appropriate.
6. Completed assignments will be returned to teachers' boxes at the end of each day.
7. Teachers must have student assignments prepared and to the Skills Coaches each morning.

#### **Skill Building Procedures:**

1. Student tracker and target goals
2. Minimum 3 days in Skill Building
3. Interview with administration and the referring teacher before re-entering the classroom.
4. Students earning a "4" on their tracker must go directly to Skill Building. Teachers are encouraged to give a student what they earn.
5. A student may work his/her way completely out of the program and off the tracker by earning on 1's and 2's for 20 consecutive days.
6. Remediation for "At Risk" students that are also in the Skills program will be held in Skill Building rather than in Study Hall.

## Skills Schedule

8:02 – 8:52	Math
8:53 - 9:40	Core/English/Reading
9:41 - 10:05	Value Lesson/ Bathroom Break
10:05 - 10:50	Science/Health
10:50 –11:35	Other Electives/Catch up
11:35 - 12:00	Lunch
12:00 -12:45	History/ Social Studies
12:45 -1:10	Value Lesson/ Bathroom Break
1:10 - 1:25	P.E. (Lap around the track)
1:25 - 2:15	Catch Up for the Day
2:15	Clean up/ Copy Trackers*

\*Student needs to stay by the office until the bell rings.

\*\*This schedule can be rearranged to fit the need of each student.  
However, lunch needs to be taken at the same time since we need  
to pick it up before the first lunch period.

### Skill Building Tracker 2008-2009

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Target Goals	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>
1. Follow Instructions the first time given									
2. Stay on Task									
3. Respond to peers appropriately									
4.									
Teacher's Initial									

Ratings: 1= Awesome!!!  
2= Good

3= Warning  
4= Needs Practice (Go to Skills right away!)

Teacher's Comments:

---



---



---



---

Parent's Comments:

---



---



---

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### On Task Behavior Sheet

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Skills I am working on (Tracker Goals):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

You will be given timings throughout the day that will help you stay on-task. If you complete all of your skills during a timing session, give yourself a "X" in the box. If you missed completing one or more of your skills, put an "O" in the box.


In order to move to a level at the end of the day, the "Consequence Log" must not have been signed more than once, and the "On-Task Behavior Sheet" must be 80% or above.

\_\_\_\_\_ # of "X's" marked = \_\_\_\_\_ %  
 \_\_\_\_\_ # of Timings (Count "X's" and "O's")

How well do you feel you used your time (explain)?

---



---

# Consequence Log

Name	Date	Warning	Stay on Level	Drop back level	Behavior Reflection

Have the student initial in the box next to the appropriate consequence. If a student needs an additional consequence after the behavior reflection, they will move back another level that day.

**Behavior Reflection**

Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Behavior: Morning or Afternoon

1.) Today, I chose to have an inappropriate behavior at school. My behavior was \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2.) I was reminded of the same behavior \_\_\_\_\_ times just today.

3.) I did not choose to change my behavior because I \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4.) Because of my choice, my consequence(s) are \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5.) From now on, my behavior will be appropriate for school. That appropriate behavior is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Student's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_



### Skills Exit Interview

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

1) List the goals you worked on while in the Skills Program (tracker goals):

- 
- 
- 
- 

2) How do you feel you have improved from the Skills Program?

---

---

3) Name something else you have learned in the Skills Program:

---

---

4) Why do you feel you are ready to exit the Skills Program?

---

---

Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Skills Teacher Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Administrator Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date Approved \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix O

### CMS Rtl Three-Tier Model

### Cedar Middle School RtI Three-tier Model

TIER 1 – CLASSROOM	TIER 2 – SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS	TIER 3 – SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS
Best Teaching Practices Common Assessments – department Benchmarks – Achievement Interventions (including parent contact) Remediation Documentation of failed interventions (At Risk Students) Referral to Study Hall (Academic) Referral to Skill Building (Behavior + from 2 teachers)	Study Hall Program – from academic teachers Organizational Skills taught Skill Building Organizational Skills enforced Resource Study Hall Basic (Resource Math) – IEP & Reg Ed. Students SST (T.A.T) Support	Study Hall – targeted small group At Risk – all day Study Hall Organizational & Study skills taught Documentation of Interventions ESL – (ESL & Low Level Readers) Basic Reading Classes TAT & Referral to Special Education

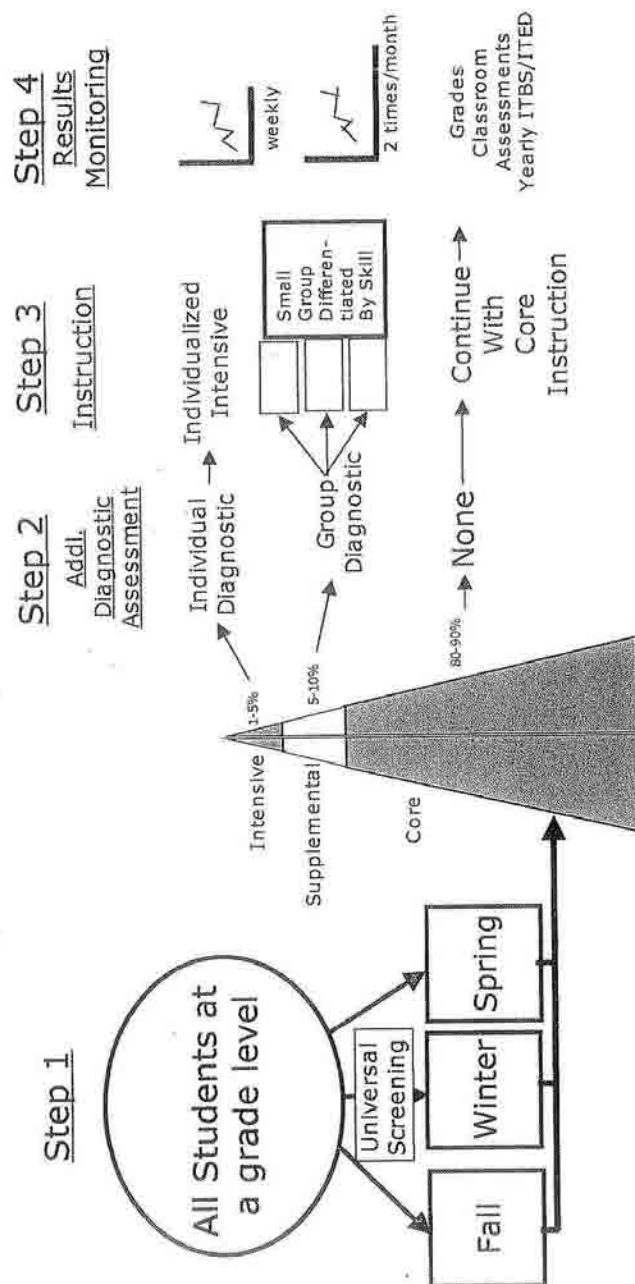
#### Discussion Topics:

SUU Partnership Reading Program – 6<sup>th</sup> grade  
 PTA Volunteers – Math Facts and Star Reading  
 Teen Mentors – Use in Study Hall and low level classes only

## Appendix P

### Standard Treatment Protocol Model

# How Does it Fit Together? Group-Level Diagnostic Std. Treatment Protocol



## Appendix Q

### RtI Debriefing Guiding Questions

January 28, 2008

Department Chairs:

At today's Team Meeting, would you please address the following items pertaining to the RtI model and the next assessment that needs to be completed? As you are discussing testing dates, keep in mind that 6<sup>th</sup> grade will be giving the Direct Writing Assessment in February. Also, teachers begin reviewing for the end-of-levels testing the first of April. That testing window starts April 21<sup>st</sup> and goes through May 15<sup>th</sup>.

We will schedule a meeting with all department heads and the SST to review all suggestions and formulate a possible plan of action. Please return this paper with all suggestions to the assistant principal asap.

1. When would be a good testing window to complete the second and the third and final screenings using the QRI assessment tool for this year?

2. -Suggestions for testing/screening windows for the 2008/2009 school year. Note: If we follow what the research says about the screening process for a full systematic RtI program, the entire student body is screened 3 times a year.

3. -Any suggestions to improve the RtI process. One example that has been shared is to administer the QRI orally at the beginning and ending of the school year and then progress monitor by giving the silent reading section of the QRI periodically and at mid-year.

## Appendix R

### RtI Department Chair Sample Meeting Agenda



January 28, 2008

Department Chairs:

At today's Team Meeting, would you please address the following items pertaining to the RtI model and the next assessment that needs to be completed? As you are discussing testing dates, keep in mind that 6<sup>th</sup> grade will be giving the Direct Writing Assessment in February. Also, teachers begin reviewing for the end-of-levels testing the first of April. That testing window starts April 21<sup>st</sup> and goes through May 15<sup>th</sup>.

We will schedule a meeting with all department heads and the SST to review all suggestions and formulate a possible plan of action. Please return this paper with all suggestions to the assistant principal asap.

1. When would be a good testing window to complete the second and the third and final screenings using the QRI assessment tool for this year?

- Not SEOP week – we are doing our yearly writing sample tests
- Mid-March and well before EOL's
- March 31<sup>st</sup> – April 11<sup>th</sup>
- April 28 – May 2 or May 12-22
- May 12-16
- Late May after EOL's
- After EOL's
  - We are planning to test only tier 2 & 3
  - Are the paras now qualified to test since they've been trained?
  - We would like to test only our students who are below grade level.

2. –Suggestions for testing/screening windows for the 2008/2009 school year. Note: If we follow what the research says about the screening process for a full systematic RtI program, the entire student body is screened 3 times a year.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Start August 25<sup>th</sup> and finish September 5<sup>th</sup>
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> and Jan. 5<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup>
- 3<sup>rd</sup> March 23<sup>rd</sup> – April 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Sept. done by?
- Stipend teachers first of August – give 9 months growth
- Pay Subs to be in classes –End of May
- We feel strongly that we can get fairly accurate results combining DIBELS and STAR scores. We would then administer the QRI to those students who fall into Tiers 2 & 3
- Star: August and September
- QRI: As needed
- QRI/STAR: May
- How do we progress monitor QRI?

- 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> week of September or maybe before school starts
- 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> week of January
- After EOL's
- Too much time lost in a school teaching year to test 3 times a year. Don't continue to test 12+ reading score students 3 times. Find 1 level to test.

3. -Any suggestions to improve the RtI process. One example that has been shared is to administer the QRI orally at the beginning and ending of the school year and then progress monitor by giving the silent reading section of the QRI periodically and at mid-year.

- Give the Words Their Way upper level spelling inventory three times a year. (done by the general classroom teacher)
- Get more volunteers (PTA) to help out with all testing windows.
- Do we need the same measurement 3 times? Students perform differently on different tests (written, silent, oral)
- We agree with this idea. However, all of us feel it is not an advantageous situation (waste of precious time) to administer the test school-wide. There are quicker, easier ways to first identify struggling readers.
- We are concerned about the consistency/validity of testing from one teacher to the next. We suggest using the STAR as a possible guide for who should be tested.
- Find a way to do this on the computer! EOL's will be given that way. Gives more time to teach. Hire someone to help test.
- Can't test for a total of 45 school days. It took 2 weeks to test all the students. QRI 2times a year and add in the STAR for the 3<sup>rd</sup> test. Perhaps a shorter evaluation than the QRI.

## Appendix S

### ICSD Response to Instruction/Intervention Blueprint

# Iron County School District

## Response to Instruction/Intervention Blueprint



### School Board

Alan Adams, President  
Barbara Corry, Vice President  
LynAnn Ellsworth  
Stephen Allen  
Michelle Jorgenson

### Superintendent

James S. Johnson

Iron County School District  
2077 W. Royal Hunte Drive  
Cedar City, UT 84720

May 2009

### ICSD RtI Leadership Team

Superintendent – Jim Johnson  
 ICSD School Board Member – LynAnn Ellsworth  
 Secondary Ed. Director/Student Services – Paul Maggio  
 Elementary Ed. Director/Curriculum – Terry Pickett  
 Special Programs Director – Shannon Dulaney  
 Staff Development and Gifted and Talented Coordinator – Val Pack  
 Title I/Literacy Coordinator – Jan Downs  
 ESL Coordinator – Mike Moyle  
 Adult Ed. Coordinator – Steve Schofield (Adult High & Even Start)  
 School Psychologist – Tony Loveless  
 Technology Representative – Laurie Kirmeyer  
 Literacy Specialist – Bylynda Murray (South Elementary)  
 High School Administrator – Jennifer Wood (Canyon View High School)  
 Middle School Administrator – Jane Twitchell (Cedar Middle School)  
 Middle School Administrator – Conrad Aitken (Canyon View Middle School)  
 Elementary School Administrator – Deon Goshorn (Iron Springs Elementary)  
 Secondary General Educator – Sharon Wasden (Canyon View Middle School)  
 Secondary Special Educator – Kaycee Hathaway (Cedar High School)  
 Elementary General Educator – Stacie Reber (Three Peaks Elementary)  
 Elementary Special Educator – Susan Hulet (Parowan Elementary)

*\*\*\* Please use any of the above team members as a resource when developing school blueprints and implementing school RtI plans.*

### ICSD Response to Instruction/Intervention Philosophy

"Most people think I am a dreamer...we need visions for larger things, for the unfolding and reviewing of worthwhile things.

—Mary McLeod Bethune

The overarching theme or capstone of the Iron County School District RtI model states that efforts toward continued school improvement should be based on "Empowering all students to learn through systematic school-wide support". This support can be given to ALL students through ongoing collaboration involving teachers, administrators, families, specialists and community partners. Through systematic district and school-wide efforts, ALL students will be provided services based on the evaluation of individual needs through consistent progress monitoring and collaborative problem-solving efforts.

The ICSD Response to Instruction/Intervention district leadership team has developed a district RtI blueprint in an effort to articulate the essential components of an effective RtI model. Each school will then develop their school's blueprint based on the standards outlined in the district document. The RtI essential components are included in the model's three dimensional pyramid structure and are based on current research in the field of effective practices. RtI is not an "add-on" program, but instead a means of bringing together current district and school improvement efforts under one umbrella. Through ongoing staff development and collaboration between all schools, PreK – Adult and at every grade level and within every subject area, student needs will be met through a systematic, multi-tiered problem-solving team approach.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

SHANNON KAY DULANEY

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**Personal Statement**

I believe that all educators should be actively engaged in learning throughout their lives: those that choose the administrative path included. Research is an essential component of this learning process in that it provides the means and impetus for not only learning, but also improvement. I believe the university provides the environment to build an academic foundation for success in all who choose to become a part of this community of learners. It is my goal to, someday, be a part of this learning community.

**Education**

**Doctorate of Education**, Utah State University, College of Education and Human Services Logan, Utah. The Emma Eccles School of Teacher Education and Leadership: Graduation: April 2010.

**Dissertation Title:** Cedar Middle School's Response to intervention journey: A systematic, multi-tier, problem-solving approach to program implementation: Approved December 7, 2009.

**Chair:** Dr. Barry Franklin

**Administrative / Supervisory Administrative Certificate.** Southern Utah University, College of Education. Awarded: May 2000.

**Master of Education.** Southern Utah University. Cedar City, Utah: College of Education. Graduation: May 2000.

**Bachelor of Arts.** California State University, Fullerton, California. Graduation: June 1994.

**Secondary Education Certificate.** Utah State Office of Education. Awarded: January 2007. (current)

### **Teaching Interests**

- Foundations of Education and Special Education
- Secondary English courses
- Using Data in the general education classroom
- Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi – tiered systems of support (MTSS)

### **Research Interests**

- Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)
- Special Education policy and practice
- Data-based decision making

### **Academic Experience**

**Conference Presenter.** National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). Topic: Tightening the Net: A Middle School Journey. Boston, Massachusetts, February 24-27, 2009.

**Director of Special Programs.** Iron County School District, Cedar City, UT. (2005-Present).

**Principal, Southwest Education Academy** (Alternative High School). Iron County School District, Cedar City, UT. (2001-2005).

**Youth in Custody teacher.** Iron County School District, Cedar City, UT. (1997-2001).

**English, Drama & Choral teacher.** Moreno Valley Unified School District, Moreno Valley, CA. (1995-1997).